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CHECO

SOUTHEAST ASIA

REPORT

**THE USAF RESPONSE TO THE
SPRING 1972 NVN OFFENSIVE:
SITUATION & REDEPLOYMENT**

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14. ABSTRACT Project CHECO was established in 1962 to document and analyze air operations in Southeast Asia. Over the years the meaning of the acronym changed several times to reflect the escalation of operations: Current Historical Evaluation of Counterinsurgency Operations, Contemporary Historical Evaluation of Combat Operations and Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations. Project CHECO and other U. S. Air Force Historical study programs provided the Air Force with timely and lasting corporate insights into operational, conceptual and doctrinal lessons from the war in SEA.					
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THE USAF RESPONSE TO THE SPRING 1972 NVN OFFENSIVE: SITUATION AND REDEPLOYMENT

10 OCTOBER 1972

HQ PACAF

**Directorate of Operations Analysis
CHECO/CORONA HARVEST DIVISION**

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FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

Jackie C. Bethea

JACKIE C. BETHEA, Captain, USAF
CHECO/CORONA HARVEST Division
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1 Attachment
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(9) As U.S. ground forces withdrew, so did U.S. air power, but with a major difference. Whereas late in 1971 U.S. troops had lost the capability to influence the outcome of major operations, American air power had to take "up the slack in U.S. offensive" strength. While American planes flew fewer missions in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), attacks against the enemy lines of communications (LOCs) in Laos and Cambodia increased in intensity if not in number.^{5/}

(10) As the dry season began in Laos and Cambodia in late 1971, U.S. leaders initiated another in the COMMANDO HUNT series of air interdiction campaigns. Labeled COMMANDO HUNT VII, the campaign began early in November and continued through most of the 1971-72 dry season, but with reduced air resources. Although U.S. aerial sorties over the Laotian panhandle steadily increased from southwest monsoon levels, the sortie level during the campaign was 30 percent below that which had been available during COMMANDO HUNT V.^{6/} Conversely, enemy activities in Cambodia, northern Laos, the Laotian panhandle, and southern NVN were up from the levels of previous years.

(11) In Cambodia, enemy operations against both the Forces Armee Nationale Khmer (FANK) and the ARVN gave indications that the enemy might attempt a major offensive while the U.S. was withdrawing and before the ARVN reached a stronger posture. Allied intelligence officials became increasingly concerned about the NVA build-up, both in the tri-border

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area opposite South Vietnam's Central Highlands, and in the area near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).*

(7) In northern Laos (nicknamed BARREL ROLL), the Communists had launched their 1971 annual dry season offensive earlier than usual against Laotian forces on the Plaine Des Jarres (PDJ). General Vang Pao's Meos were driven off the PDJ and the NVA had them under extremely serious siege at Long Tieng.

(7) In southern Laos (nicknamed STEEL TIGER), enemy resupply during the wet season had been higher than in previous years. By the beginning of the COMMANDO HUNT VII campaign, the enemy's road networks in the Laotian panhandle had been expanded by about 30 percent.^{7/} Moreover, it became evident early in the campaign that the enemy was taking advantage of an air defense build-up in southern NVN to disrupt COMMANDO HUNT air activities in the NVN/Laos border areas. SAMs were fired at aircraft attacking key targets in the border areas, and NVN MIGs began to make incursions into Laotian airspace. Both tactics, employed earlier and more frequently than in COMMANDO HUNT V, were posing a serious threat to U.S. air resources operating over Laos, particularly near the border areas. This increasingly aggressive use of enemy air defenses was also threatening reconnaissance missions monitoring the enemy build-up in southern NVN.

*The intelligence assessment of the anticipated NVA offensive is treated in greater detail in Chapter II.

[REDACTED]

aircraft. It was apparently for the violation of these basic rules that in March 1972 the Commander of 7AF was recalled from SEA, and eventually was relieved of his duties and brought before the House Armed Services Committee to explain his actions.*

(7) As March drew to a close, it became apparent that, despite the increased use of newer equipment and munitions, COMMANDO HUNT VII was not going to prevent a major enemy thrust in NVN, nor had operations such as PRIZE BULL and PROUD DEEP deterred Communist preparations for the offensive.

*See "Hearings before Committee on the Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 92nd Congress, 2nd Session, Subject, Nomination of John D. Lavelle, Gen. Creighton Abrams, and Adm. John S. McCain."

[REDACTED]

(7) In response to the enemy's build-up and his increasingly aggressive employment of air defense resources, a number of special strike missions were conducted in southern NVN in late 1971 and early 1972. Such operations were infrequent, were of short duration, and required special approval by highest authority. By far the most prominent of these operations were PRIZE BULL and PROUD DEEP ALPHA,^{8/} which were conducted in September and December 1971, respectively, and were aimed at high-value military targets in southern NVN.^{9/} In addition to these individually approved raids, air resources were authorized to conduct protective reaction strikes when threatened or attacked by enemy air defenses during authorized missions in NVN or Laos.

(8) The number and size of such protective reaction strikes, though quite small in comparison to ongoing operations in Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam, increased steadily throughout late 1971 and early 1972. It was these protective reaction strikes which were later to become the subject of widespread controversy when it was alleged that a number of them had not been conducted within operating authorities. While some degree of latitude was inherent in interpretation of authorities in view of the greatly increased enemy threat to U.S. air activities, there were a number of basic ground rules which were well defined and not subject to interpretation. That is, strikes were restricted to the threat below the 20th parallel, and were to be conducted only as immediate responses to enemy fire or hostile actions which directly threatened U.S.

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24 October 1972

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Change to Project CHECO Report Titled "The USAF Response to the Spring 1972 NVN Offensive: Situation and Redeployment" (U)


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✓ 1. Please revise that portion of the Table of Contents reading "CHAPTER II, INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES AND MILITARY SITUATION" to read "CHAPTER II, MILITARY SITUATION." Change subheading which reads "Intelligence Estimates (Unclassified Sources)" to read "Unclassified Statements by Government Officials;" change second subheading to "Intelligence Estimates--Classified Sources."

2. Change chapter heading and initial subheading on page 7 to agree with revised Table of Contents.

FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF


JACKIE C. BETHEA, Captain, USAF
CHECO/CORONA HARVEST Division
Operations Analysis
DCS/Operations

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PROJECT CHECO REPORTS

The counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare environment of Southeast Asia has resulted in the employment of USAF airpower to meet a multitude of requirements. The varied applications of airpower have involved the full spectrum of USAF aerospace vehicles, support equipment, and manpower. As a result, there has been an accumulation of operational data and experiences that, as a priority, must be collected, documented, and analyzed as to current and future impact upon USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine.

Fortunately, the value of collecting and documenting our SEA experiences was recognized at an early date. In 1962, Hq USAF directed CINCPACAF to establish an activity that would be primarily responsive to Air Staff requirements and direction, and would provide timely and analytical studies of USAF combat operations in SEA.

Project CHECO, an acronym for Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations, was established to meet this Air Staff requirement. Managed by Hq PACAF, with elements at Hq 7AF and 7/13AF, Project CHECO provides a scholarly, "on-going" historical examination, documentation, and reporting on USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine in PACOM. This CHECO report is part of the overall documentation and examination which is being accomplished. It is an authentic source for an assessment of the effectiveness of USAF airpower in PACOM when used in proper context. The reader must view the study in relation to the events and circumstances at the time of its preparation--recognizing that it was prepared on a contemporary basis which restricted perspective and that the author's research was limited to records available within his local headquarters area.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Robert E. Hiller", is positioned above the typed name.

ROBERT E. HILLER
Director of Operations Analysis
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Alfred A. Picinich

ALFRED A. PICINICH, Lt Colonel, USAF
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

(U) When the Southeast Asian (SEAsian) dry season began in November 1971, the United States (U.S.) followed its continuing policy of disengagement and withdrawal from the Vietnam War. Although there was increased combat and logistics activity by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) throughout much of SEAsia, President Richard M. Nixon ordered U.S. troop pullouts to continue on schedule.

(U) At the end of 1971, President Nixon announced the U.S. forces "had shifted essentially to a defensive and base security role. . . ." The U.S., he said, was "ending American involvement in the war. . . ." The Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) had "come a long way . . . up to 1.1 million from the 1968 level of 800,000, and conducted twenty major combat engagements for every one involving U.S. forces." He stated that much of the progress in 1971 could be traced "to the disruption of the enemy's network in southern Laos* just as similar operations two years ago [had advanced] Vietnamization in 1970." The President referred to the heightened NVA offensive activities by cautioning that "in coming months the enemy [can] be expected to pose maximum challenges to Vietnamization." But, he added, "we, and the South Vietnamese are both

*During Operation LAM SON 719.

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confident of their ability to handle the North Vietnamese challenge.^{1/}

~~(S)~~ As early as April 1971 the President had begun accelerating the withdrawal rate. On 7 April 1971 he announced that American forces in Vietnam would be down to 184,000 by 1 December 1971, saying that "the day the South Vietnamese can take over their own defense is in sight."^{2/} This was 16,000 fewer spaces than what Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) had planned for the latter date.^{3/}

~~(S)~~ This meant that U.S. air power became the most important means for preventing the enemy from effectively maintaining and resupplying his forces. In May 1971, the Commander, MACV (COMUSMACV), gave the Commander, Pacific Command (CINCPAC), detailed justification for maintaining specified combat sortie levels throughout FYs 72 and 73. This justification stated that the mission required 10,000 tacair, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship sorties per month throughout FY 1972, and 8,000 tacair, 1,000 B-52, and 700 gunship sorties per month throughout FY 1973. B-52 sortie levels were not to decrease along with other U.S. military activities since the use of ARC LIGHT missions was to compensate for reduced U.S. military potential. The COMUSMACV-requested sortie levels were approved and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) further allowed surges above the monthly ceiling if emergency conditions existed.^{4/}

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(S) As U.S. ground forces withdrew, so did U.S. air power, but with a major difference. Whereas late in 1971 U.S. troops had lost the capability to influence the outcome of major operations, American air power had to take "up the slack in U.S. offensive" strength. While American planes flew fewer missions in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), attacks against the enemy lines of communication (LOCs) in Laos and Cambodia increased in intensity if not in number. The number of protective reaction strikes against North Vietnamese (NVN) SAMs, MIGs and AAA increased toward the end of 1971 as both sides stepped up the air war.^{5/}

(S) The Communists, late in 1971, had launched their annual dry season offensive earlier than usual against Laotian forces on the Plaine Des Jarres (PDJ). General Vang Pao's Meos were driven off the PDJ and the NVA had them under extremely serious siege at Long Tieng in the sector of Laos nicknamed BARREL ROLL. The NVN were likewise pushing supplies south along the Ho Chi Minh trail during the wet season in the spring and summer. Their operations in Cambodia against both the Forces Armee Nationale Khmer (FANK) and the ARVN gave indications that the enemy might attempt major offensive while the U.S. was withdrawing and before the ARVN reached a stronger posture. Allied intelligence officials became increasingly concerned about the NVA buildup both in the tri-border area opposite South Vietnam's Central Highlands, and in the area in and around the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).*

*The intelligence assessment of the anticipated NVA offensive is treated in greater detail in Chapter II.

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To counter the Communist's increased efforts to prepare for a general offensive, the U.S. leaders initiated another in the COMMANDO HUNT series of air interdiction campaigns. Labeled COMMANDO HUNT VII, this one began early in November 1971 and continued through most of the 1971-72 dry season, but with reduced resources. Although U.S. aerial sorties over the Laotian panhandle and into NVN began a steady increase that continued into 1972,^{6/} the total number was 30 percent below what had been available during COMMANDO HUNT V. At the same time the enemy road networks had been increased by about the same percentage.^{7/} The Allies and the NVN made extensive efforts to counter each other's moves, but as March drew to a close it appeared that, despite the increased use of newer equipment and munitions, COMMANDO HUNT VII was not going to prevent a major enemy thrust into RVN. Supplementary massive air campaigns such as PRIZE BULL and PROUD DEEP ALPHA,^{8/} both of which involved extensive strikes in NVN,^{9/} did not deter Communist preparations for the offensive.

Overview

(U) On the night of 29-30 March 1972, the NVA launched a major invasion of the RVN. This was the enemy's biggest offensive of the entire Vietnam war to date. The offensive was expected; its scope and intensity were not.

(C) This report, the first in a series of five, is meant to set the stage for the 1972 NVA Spring Offensive. It covers first the intelligence

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estimates of NVN intentions and capabilities. This includes the often-contradictory statements attributed to "official sources" by the news media. It also contains classified estimates by intelligence sources in SEAsia. Next, the report covers the military situation to include the enemy and Allied orders of battle as the opposing forces prepared for and finally engaged in actual combat.

✶ The main thrust of the report, however, examines the U.S. air response to the enemy buildup and subsequent invasion. The other CHECO reports on the offensive cover actual air operations during the campaign; this study deals primarily with the most extensive air power deployment and buildup, in such a short time period, in history. In the midst of the withdrawal of American ground, naval and air forces, the U.S. reversed itself in the latter two areas and, in approximately 90 days, amassed one of the most powerful air armadas in recent years.

✶ There were basically three phases in the air deployments. The first was the pre-offensive buildup designed to deter, delay or weaken any NVA threat to Vietnamization, the RVN or remaining American forces. The second phase fell mainly within a two-month time frame--April and May, 1972. This was when most of the air resources deployed to SEAsia and centered around the CONSTANT GUARD tacair deployments. The third phase was characterized mainly by supplementary deployments of Strategic Air Command (SAC), Tactical Air Command (TAC), U.S. Navy (USN) and U.S.

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Marine Corps (USMC) assets and the deployment of tacair assets from Da Nang Air Base, RVN, to newly reactivated or just opened Thailand bases.

(U) The other CHECO reports on the 1972 NVN offensive take up where this study ends.

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CHAPTER II

~~INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES AND MILITARY SITUATION~~

~~UNCLASSIFIED STATEMENTS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS~~ ~~Estimates of Enemy Capability (Unclassified Sources)~~

(U) High level U.S. officials and leading news media war-watchers had expressed guarded optimism about the military situation as 1971 ended. Since military intelligence sources admitted that NVA offensive and logistics activity had picked up earlier and with greater intensity than during several previous dry seasons, official news releases gave evidence of some concern about a possible threat to South Vietnam in 1972.

(U) Secretary of the Air Force Robert Seamans, after a trip to SEAsia, reported a build-up of Soviet-made and Chinese-made transport trucks in evidence around Hanoi and Haiphong. This concentration of vehicles led him to believe that "the North Vietnamese might be preparing for a major infiltration push into the south."^{10/} This was in the face of contemporary estimates that North Vietnam could furnish no more than one-half the supplies needed for its forces in RVN and the Khmer Republic.^{11/}

(U) Top military leaders also voiced their judgments of the early dry season situation. The Marine Corps Commandant, General Cushman, said the U.S. had put the RVN in "shape" to govern itself and forestall a Communist takeover if the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) and its military forces had the requisite will to succeed. General William Westmoreland, Army Chief of Staff, was quoted as saying that a military takeover had

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"clearly" been prevented and that Vietnamization was "substantially completed."^{12/}

(U) During early January 1972, however, it became increasingly evident that concern was growing over NVN initiatives during the current campaign season. Massive air strikes of late December, collectively nicknamed OPERATION PROUD DEEP ALPHA, elicited news comments to the effect that the attacks cast shadows over the process of Vietnamizing the war. When these doubts were revealed to "Administration officials," they "denied that there was a connection between the air attacks and any weakness on the part of Allied ground forces in South Vietnam." The U.S. government admitted that there were signs of an approaching offensive by the NVA and that it might be expected in early February.^{13/} Some otherwise-unidentified "U.S. commanders" believed that the NVN wanted a number of "spectaculars" timed to coincide with President Nixon's Peking and Moscow trips and the presidential elections. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird saw the December air attacks as the U.S. response to enemy efforts to increase infiltration through the DMZ. Other "U.S. military men" predicted "Communist actions far less spectacular than [the] 1968 Tet Offensive--a country-wide attack the Reds are no longer thought capable of mounting."^{14/}

(U) A few American and Vietnamese officials admitted that they thought an offensive in the Central Highlands was imminent. Some Allied intelligence sources tapped by the press estimated that NVN goals were bigger than anything in the last four years. Brig. Gen. George E. Wear publicly confirmed

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intelligence information that the 320 NVA Division was moving down to the B-3 Front from the DMZ, but he did not think they would try to take Kontum or Pleiku cities. Some Montagnards even reported there was "mechanized activity" west of the Cambodian border in the VC/NVA Base Area 609, but Gen Wear played this down by saying there should not be much trouble keeping the enemy out. "But," he warned cryptically, "they shouldn't have been able to [come in] in 1968 either, and they did."^{15/}

(S) Throughout the dry season preparatory period, the NVA made moves that indicated its major thrusts would be in South Vietnam's Military Regions (MR) I and II, specifically in Quang Tri Province, Thua Thien Province, and in the Central Highlands Provinces of Pleiku and Kontum. The Saigon correspondent for The Economist noted that three VC/NVA divisions normally based in the eastern Khmer Republic (KR) had disappeared and might be moving toward the Saigon approaches.^{16/} Allied leaders expected there might be some enemy activity in the western part of MR III, which included Saigon, as well as in MR IV, but nothing big was foreseen in either section.

(S) Most attention was focused on the Central Highlands where ARVN forces were weakest, the population was sparse, and GVN control was least evident. Military sources reported that heavy B-52 raids in that area began on 15 January and averaged more than nine sorties per day in MR II, particularly along the B-3 Front where 30-50,000 NVN troops were believed

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to be concentrating. Some of the same sources predicted that the Hanoi regime was apparently ready to launch a large-scale offensive, but one which, in intensity, would be "well below that of 1968."^{17/} John Paul Vann, the senior American advisor in MR II until his death in June 1972, expected the offensive to hit hardest in Kontum Province where the major targets would be Dak To and Ben Het. Vann estimated that the NVA was prepared to lose one-fifth of approximately 50,000 men which intelligence sources indicated were ready to attack in MR I and II. He did not, however, fear "losing anything" despite the weakness of the ARVN in MR II, nor did Vann predict any serious attempt by the NVA to take either Pleiku or Kontum. The enemy would be destroyed primarily by artillery and air power, because, he said, "I'm enough of a realist that I'm not going to ask the ARVN to do what they won't do."^{18/}

(U) By early February many military sources talked openly of a multi-phase enemy offensive which they expected almost momentarily. The general consensus was that the NVA would strike simultaneously with coordinated assaults of varying intensity throughout much of the RVN, including parts of MR III. Military spokesmen anticipated, however, that the enemy's main blows would fall generally on Kontum, Pleiku, Quang Tri, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and Thua Thien Provinces; more specific targets were expected to be the capitals of these provinces along with the old battleground at Khe Sanh. North Vietnamese troop movements were said to be the heaviest in two years, with four of NVN's five general

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reserve divisions reported moving generally southward from the DMZ for the first time. Fully organized armor and supply units were also on the move south and all types of shipments down the Trail complex were up 20-30 percent.^{19/}

(U) Even the NVN official news media, such as the newspaper Quan Doi Nhan Dan, gave veiled evidence that the coming offensive was shaping up. An unidentified reporter using the pen name Chien Thang (Victor) said:

In armed struggle main force attacks have a key role. . . . The main force is the most important part of an army's combat strength in a war. These attacks are steel-like ones to annihilate the enemy . . . and rapidly change the balance of forces and the situation on the battlefield.

"Victor" also wrote that the situation had never before been so favorable [for the NVA]. This pseudonym had been used before in the NVN official press to make important policy pronouncements.^{20/}

(U) The most common estimates predicted the offensive might come during Tet, the Lunar new year celebration in Asia. Much of the speculation about this particular time period was based on what had happened in 1968 on the same holiday. In 1972 Tet began on 14 February and, as the holiday neared, there was increasing tension in many quarters, including among some military officials. There was also speculation that the offensive would begin sometime between 14-29 February since that would coincide both with Tet and President Nixon's much-heralded China trip.

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(U) There were other sources, including some "senior Pentagon officials," who disagreed with the Tet predictions. An upsurge in ground and air activity in mid-February caused news reporters to speculate that the offensive had begun, but the "Pentagon officials" believed the reporting was premature. They said that "major units we [are] watching are not yet moving into final attack positions. . . ." One general stated that enemy preparations were being made even before the President announced his trip to Peking. The same source said that the offensive would likely last long after President Nixon returned to the U.S., which made it unlikely that the China trip was a key to the timing of the offensive. There were also some ARVN generals who did not believe the NVA was ready; they believed no offensive would come before the end of March.^{21/} Those who agreed with this estimate turned out to be remarkably accurate.

(U) There was no offensive at Tet, nor did it occur during Nixon's China trip. There was no slackening, however, of the NVN buildup. U.S. intelligence sources continued to warn publicly that Hanoi was preparing for a "make-or-break military effort." The Communists had doubled their infiltration of troops, armor, and other war materiel into the RVN and along its borders with Laos and Cambodia. There was an extensive artillery buildup in the DMZ. The USSR increased its shipments of petroleum products and "other cargo" to the NVN harbor of Haiphong. At least 40 percent of the enemy buildup had gone into the B-3 Front and official American sources estimated that approximately 220,000 North Vietnamese troops were poised in Laos, Cambodia and the RVN.^{22/}

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(U) The news media in the U.S. began criticizing the military prognosticators for "hedging their bets." Some military leaders, the news said, made the predictions; then, if the offensive came, they could say their estimates were right. If, however, no offensive occurred, the military's leaders could claim Vietnamization and pre-emptory air attacks had thwarted the enemy.

(U) Intelligence experts countered by saying that captured enemy documents indicated the offensive had been delayed until June or July.^{23/} Other "staff intelligence officers" noted "that they never predicted the exact date," and some necessary supplies were not yet in place. They were nonetheless convinced there would be a major offensive sometime in the spring or early summer.^{24/} Secretary of Defense Laird declared that the NVA was still capable of launching "2 or 3 military 'spectaculars' before the year ends," but that "AF activities" had had some effect in postponing the action. Laird denied he had ever talked in terms of specific dates--only capabilities.^{25/} Another intelligence source said that additional enemy documents captured by ARVN forces in MR II ordered a postponement of the offensive until heavy U.S. air attacks tapered off. Early March was the proposed new date revealed in these papers.^{26/} A MACV intelligence officer was quoted as saying: "We simply said [the offensive] could happen anytime now [from mid-February on]."^{27/}

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(U) By late March the military experts were predicting that the offensive would come early in April--perhaps during the first week, but possibly later in the month. John Paul Vann had bet on 21 February as the date; others agreed with him that the offensive would strike mainly in MR II, but the date was, as always, problematical.^{28/} From Phnom Penh came reports that most NVN forces seemed to have pulled back from near the Cambodian capital and were massing near the SVN border opposite MR III.^{29/} Some "Senior American officials" confused the picture even more by saying the offensive might come between July and September and would be aimed at influencing the U.S. presidential election. They said the offensive was to have taken place in February, but the NVN decided against it because they would take too many casualties.^{30/}

(U) The "official" NVN publication, Quan Doi Nhan Dan, vaguely hinted that the time was near in a 26 March editorial:^{31/}

Our youths are responding to the Fatherland's . . . call by . . . joining the Army, anxiously setting out for the battlefield and heroically charging forward and fighting and decimating the enemy.

The NVA itself may have given a hint that the invasion was imminent by actions it initiated in or near the RVN. As early as 24 March, its troops assaulted an ARVN armored cavalry command post at Kompong Trach opposite the southern tip of Vietnam. The Communists also fired rockets and mortars into ARVN positions near the DMZ and Hue, both in MR I where the invasion was

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to be launched a few days later. A district town, Truc Giang, was overrun and the SVN defenders suffered heavy casualties. ^{32/*}

(U) Another ominous sign that something might be about to break was the "most high-powered Soviet military delegation" ever to visit Hanoi. The top chief of staff of Russian air defense forces, Marshal Pavel Batitsky, was in North Vietnam, supposedly to reassure the Hanoi government in case massive U.S. aerial retaliation answered the NVN offensive. It seemed clear to some observers that the North was preparing to take whatever the U.S. dished out, and the Soviets were there at the jump-off point to guarantee massive military and moral support for the venture. ^{33/}

~~(S)~~ Most military and civilian defense observers, leaders, and experts expected the offensive. There were many surprises, however, not the least of which was the date. The scope, the intensity, the main fronts, the equipment, the response (ARVN and U.S.)--all developed quite differently from what many had expected, or, at least, publicly forecasted. The official, classified intelligence situation was also somewhat different.

Intelligence Estimates - ~~(Classified Sources)~~

~~(S)~~ The NVN decision to launch the offensive apparently was debated in the NVN Politburo in the spring of 1971, and preliminary preparations

*Perhaps unrelated was the U.S. suspension of the Paris talks on the same day. John L. Hess, "U.S. Calls a Halt, New York Times, 24 March 1972.

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were begun in the summer of 1971. Definite posture changes in NVN troop locations, supply efforts, training programs and communications began to emerge in the fall of 1971. Four NVA divisions--the 304th, 312th, 320th, and 325th were combined with the 70-B Front (which had been known as the Laos Front during LAM SON 719) under the joint unit designation of the 70-B/B-5 Front. In addition to these four units, the 308th NVA division had infiltrated into the RVN's Quang Tri Province with the mission of seizing it while the others operated against Dong Ha, Quang Tri City and similar targets. The NVA 324B Division was also operating in MR I as early as February 1972. The NVA's mission in MR I was to "liberate" Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces, as well as establish a local government "to control the population."^{34/}

~~(S)~~ During February 1972 the enemy increased his activity significantly in southern NVN and Quang Tri Province. Much of this activity had not been observed before by American or Vietnamese intelligence. Some enemy units which did not normally operate in that area were moving south toward or into the B-5 Front. Some of the units had not been located there since Operation LAM SON 719 a year before. The Allies gave no consideration whatsoever (in February) to the possibility that the NVA 325th division would move south from its area of operations (AO) near Hanoi. Another NVA division, the 308th, normally did not operate so near the DMZ either, but Allied intelligence presumed that the unit was deploying into a defensive posture.^{35/}

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(TS) Enemy activity began escalating in mid-February in both Quang Tri and Thua Thien Provinces, which the VC had designated Military Region Tri-Thien-Hue (MRTTH). Two NVA regiments were involved in the MRTTH activity southwest of Hue against Fire Support Bases (FSBs) Bastogne and Veghel. As the ARVN made increasing numbers of enemy contacts, the Allies identified additional NVA elements of the recently infiltrated 324B division. The ground contacts were fairly heavy and the enemy apparently suffered significant numbers of casualties.

(TS) In Quang Tri there was increased action in the form of attacks by fire (ABFs). By late February or early March, two more NVA regiments--both artillery units--were operating in the Southern DMZ or Khe Sanh area. One was equipped with long range, 130mm guns, while the other normally utilized rockets. The rocket-equipped regiment concentrated its attention on the ARVN string of northeastern FSBs just below the DMZ, but it was not abnormal to do this in the dry season. The other regiment, however, with its 130mm guns, plus some other artillery units north of the DMZ utilizing heavy artillery and armor, was not part of the normal enemy dry season pattern. In addition, there were large numbers of heavy tanks included in the NVA Order of Battle (OB). Almost every source available to Allied intelligence gatherers confirmed the Communist buildup.^{36/}

(TS) The U.S. and the GVN forecasted that the offensive would be launched in MRs I and II, but they did not anticipate it before June or July. Part of the reasoning behind this was the feeling that an NVN offensive then would have more effect on the American political scene.

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Another factor influencing Allied predictions was the pattern of NVA logistics, but these pointed out that the major effort might begin in MR II (the VC/NVA B-3 Front). All sources indicated that enough supplies, munitions, equipment and troops were going into that area to launch the offensive at just about any time after Tet. Still, however, the Allied intelligence experts believed the NVA was having trouble coordinating their efforts and would not be able to overcome this situation before June or July.^{37/}

~~(S)~~ The enemy seemed to be concentrating on preparations for making MR II and the Central Highlands their major objective.^{38/} The NVA had already possessed or had infiltrated three divisions into either Base Area 609 in the tri-border area or Binh Dinh Province nearer the coast. These were the 2d, 3d, and 320th NVA Divisions.^{39/}

~~(TS)~~ Besides MRs I and II the enemy was preparing for action in MR III, but the U.S. and GVN expected much lighter action there than in the northern central RVN. An ARVN cross-border operation in the middle of the dry season accomplished very little because of poor intelligence and a disinclination, on the part of the NVA, to accept combat at the time. The enemy simply moved out of the areas where the ARVN were operating. The Allies knew the NVA had been stockpiling in the region (known as Base Area 354) for an extended period, so the lack of contact and the inability to locate supply caches was a significant indicator of enemy intentions. Soon after the ARVN operation, elements of the NVA 5th, 7th and 9th divisions began moving toward the border region north of Tay Ninh Province.

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Communist propaganda began to stress the importance of Tay Ninh and enemy activity picked up on the approaches to the provincial capital. The indications seemed to stress Tay Ninh as the logical NVA target in MR III, so much so that when the enemy went after Loc Ninh first in Binh Long Province, it was a complete surprise. The attack on An Loc was foreseen once the NVA made the initial move in MR III. The initial movements and attacks west and north of Tay Ninh City were apparently diversions and assaults to secure LOCs. ^{40/}

(~~40~~) Allied estimators were not particularly concerned about the NVA threat to MR IV until February and March. During that period, the enemy began to seize positions along Highway 1--the main Saigon-Phnom Penh route--just across the border from the RVN. Southeastern Cambodia came more and more under the control of North Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge Forces as they fought to secure their LOCs for the invasion of MR III, and possibly MR IV as well. Toward the end of March, Kompong Trach, just across the border from Ha Tien, deep in RVN's southern MR IV, came under stepped-up attacks by elements of the NVA 1st division. The U.S. intelligence appraisers did not believe the division would come across the border in force, nor that it would be a significant threat. Military Region IV was thought to be the most secure area of the Republic and Allied intelligence felt that it was the only area the 1st NVA could threaten.* ^{41/}

*Once the offensive began and RVNAF elements were withdrawn to reinforce ARVN forces elsewhere, the NVA threat was revised upward.

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(C) That the offensive came when it did was no real surprise. The Allies believed it was "extremely likely"^{42/} that the invasion could occur at Tet, but, when it didn't, they did not change their evaluation of the threat. They also believed the forces would be mostly NVA rather than Viet Cong as in 1968. Still, the biggest surprises of the offensive were the number of NVA regulars and tanks thrown into the battle for South Vietnam.

(U) In general the NVA use of tanks in MRs I and II was predicted; the numbers and types were not. As early as January, enemy tanks were said to be operating in the Central Highlands near FSB 5 and the Ranger camp at Ben Het. Tanks and tank roads were known to exist in significant numbers in Pleiku Province.^{43/} It was thought to be only the third time NVA tanks had been used inside RVN in over 10 years and the first time since 1969.^{44/} In early February, the RVNAF began issuing anti-tank weapons^{45/} to troops in the Highlands in anticipation of more armored encounters.

(S) Allied intelligence sources verified that there were numerous tanks of several types above, in and below the DMZ--all threatening RVN's MR I. Nearly every intelligence source available to the Allied confirmed this fact.^{46/} An exact figure was hard to determine, but there were an estimated 208 tanks, up to and including T-54s*^{47/}, in that area. Agent

*The T-54 was a Soviet-built medium tank, and it also had another version--the T-55. The Chinese had supplied the NVA with their own model of this tank, but they called theirs the T-59. Most sources used the T-54 designation since they were all basically the same.

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reports had for a long time indicated tank sightings in MRs II and III, but the U.S. and RVNAF attempts to verify these with visual or photographic reconnaissance (photo recon) proved fruitless. As one Seventh Air Force (7AF) intelligence spokesman said, "Nobody could ever see the tanks."^{48/} The same source said, however, that 7AF knew there were tanks in or above the DMZ. Photo recce had confirmed this.

~~(S)~~ Up until this point in the war, Allied intelligence had been able to locate armor when the enemy moved large amounts of it. By 1972 this was no longer the case. The NVA had increased the infiltration route structure and capability by moving the LOCs farther west in Laos, and they had learned to take greater advantage of heavy jungle canopy to hide their movements. Many routes went undiscovered right into the 1971/72 dry season. This meant that tanks, trucks, guns, troops and supplies moved with relative impunity down the trail complex. The tanks were a complete surprise in MR III and, because of their numbers, a shock in MRs I and II. (Intelligence sources reveal that before the offensive, 200 to 300 enemy tanks [PT-76s, T-54s and ZSU-57/2s]* were driven into place almost totally undetected in MR II and MR III. Additionally, tank numbers were grossly underestimated in MR I.)^{49/}

~~(S)~~ The enemy OB for the 1972 offensive included an estimated 163,400 troops. This figure included combat and combat support forces

*The PT-76 was a light amphibious tank and the ZSU-57/2 was a T-54 with twin 57mm anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) guns mounted on it. It also had target acquisition equipment. The T-54 as used here includes the other Russian and Chinese Communist models.

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immediately available for use in the RVN. Broken down by MRs, the NVA could place 52,900 combat troops in action in MR I; 27,700 in MR II; 31,200 in MR III; and 15,600 against MR IV. In addition the NVN had 36,000 troops available outside RVN or its immediate borders, but within range should they choose to commit them. Many of the 36,000 were moved closer to the RVN, if not actually used. The NVN committed virtually its entire army to the conquest of the South before the offensive neared an end in the 1972 rainy season. In all, the VC/NVA had 15 divisions they could commit plus scores of independent units of regimental or smaller size. This comprised a grand total of nearly 200,000 men in the enemy OB.^{50/}

(S) The NVA's AAA below the DMZ was formidable, including nearly every conceivable weapon the enemy possessed except MIGs. Six or seven AAA regiments were located in or near MR I, but the AAA strength was actually far greater since many AAA elements were integrated into regular artillery, armored, and other units.^{51/} Besides SAMs and regular AAA weapons, the NVA introduced the Soviet-built SA-7 (Strella) heat-seeking, shoulder-fired missile, for use against low and slow-flying Allied aircraft. It was deadly, and numerous Allied aircraft losses were attributed to the weapon, yet its overall effect on the use of air power had yet to be fully evaluated when this report was written.

(U) On the night of 29-30 March the NVA launched the heaviest artillery barrage since Tet 1968, and possibly of the entire war until the siege of An Loc later in April. This was the opening of the offensive, and it came

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not in MR II where it had been predicted, but straight across the DMZ in Quang Tri Province. By 1 April the invasion of MR I by NVA ground troops was fully underway. The next major surprise blow, following by hours the one in MR I, fell in MR III. It was nearly a month before the battle for the Central Highlands took definite shape.

(U) The U.S. commanders saw immediately that the air power currently in SEAsia was not sufficient to do more than slow the enemy until more could be deployed. The story of the largest tactical air power deployment in history over such a short period of time actually began long before 29-30 March.

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CHAPTER III
U.S. AIR DEPLOYMENTS - FIRST PHASE

(U) On 25 January President Nixon spoke to the nation via TV on the status of Vietnamization and the U.S. withdrawal. It seemed obvious that White House attempts to end the war by negotiations had reached a dead end. The NVN gave no indication that they would modify their demands at Paris; they were convinced they were winning the war and could count on total victory. Despite losses estimated at nearly 800,000 dead, the NVA was well supplied with manpower and materiel. As he had done in the past, the President warned that "if the enemy's answer to our peace offer is to step up their military attacks, I shall fully meet my responsibility as Commander-in-Chief of our armed forces to protect our remaining troops."^{52/} It was not his intention to reintroduce American ground troops; in fact, he announced during the speech that U.S. troop strength would be down to 69,000 men by 1 May 1972.

(U) During his Third Annual Foreign Policy Report on 9 February 1972, the President gave further evidence that his intention was to end U.S. ground participation in Vietnam. He said then that "we are ending American involvement in the war." Our forces had shifted "essentially to a defensive and base security role. . . ." The U.S. and South Vietnamese, he stated, "are both confident of [the South Vietnamese] ability to handle the North Vietnamese challenge."^{53/}

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COMMANDO FLASH

~~(TS)~~ As early as November 1971 this "challenge" was a matter of major concern to commanders in Pacific Command (PACOM). Increment Nine of the U.S. withdrawal left 11 tactical fighter squadrons in SEAsia. The Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Air Forces (CINCPACAF) advised Admiral McCain, CINC PACOM(CINCPAC), that contingencies could arise where more sortie capability was necessary. The PACAF Operations Plan (OPLAN) C101/COMMANDO FLASH could augment tacair forces in SEAsia by up to 18 F-4s from the 405th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) at Clark AB. The plan called for up to six (6) F-4s to be integrated into host units at each of three bases--Da Nang, Ubon and Udorn--with modifications allowed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had the authority to authorize implementation of OPLAN C101. The public was to be told very little if anything "so as not to arouse" them. ^{54/}

~~(TS)~~ The NVA buildup in the face of waning U.S. strength caused General John Lavelle, 7AF Commander, to request partial implementation of OPLAN C101 on 28 December 1971. Two F-4s and aircrews from the Clark-based 523 Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS) were already in place at Udorn ^{55/} and General Lavelle requested the same numbers for Ubon and Da Nang. On 29 December the JCS directed the deployment of six COMMANDO FLASH F-4s and crews in accordance with General Lavelle's request. The deployment was not to exceed 90 days. ^{56/}

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~~(TS)~~ The enemy threat was serious enough by late January for COMUSMACV to request deployment of all COMMANDO FLASH assets if needed.^{57/} Again the JCS responded by directing deployment of up to 18 F-4s and aircrews for up to 30 days. The Joint Chiefs also authorized surpassing the Thailand headroom ceiling, but there was to be no public announcement. To facilitate the deployment, CINCPACAF allowed direct coordination between 7AF and 13AF.^{58/}

~~(TS)~~ Before this authority went out, however, General Lavelle informed General Lucius Clay, Jr., CINCPACAF, that the joint 7AF-13AF concept called for only 12 of the 18UE 523 TFS's F-4s to be in SEAsia. The other six, under this planning, would remain at Clark for rotational purposes. General Lavelle recommended that 12 aircraft, 18 aircrews and 117 maintenance personnel be deployed and in place by 10 February, with four aircraft each at Da Nang, Ubon and Udorn.^{59/} The next day, 6 February, 13AF told the CINCPACAF Director of Operations (DO) that the six F-4s remaining at Clark would maintain a "visual presence of alert forces...in Taiwan and Clark in support of military and political commitments." If all 18 went to SEAsia, 13AF officials believed that other operational or training commitments would cease. They recognized that the deployment of all COMMANDO FLASH assets was authorized and that if General Lavelle needed them, the entire 523d would go. Thirteenth Air Force wanted PACAF and CINCPAC notified in advance of the "mission degradation."^{60/}

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(S) On 7 February, Lt General McNickle (13AF Commander) notified 7AF that all 18 F-4s would go to SEAsia, but they would be withdrawn in increments to establish an orderly rotation to Clark for maintenance.^{61/} At the same time, CINCPACAF requested clarification from 7AF and 13AF of the unanticipated change sought by the two Numbered Air Forces when they recommended a deviation from the original request for the immediate deployment of all COMMANDO FLASH aircraft. Seventh Air Force, on 2 February, had indicated there was an immediate need for the airplanes before enemy activity picked up. CINCPACAF had already told CINCPAC on 4 February that the 405 TFW's mission at Clark would be degraded, and this was two days before 13AF pointed it out. In addition to the joint 7AF-13AF recommendation of 5 February, General Lavelle had indicated there was no real need before 10 February. CINCPACAF implied that 7AF needs had perhaps changed or were not as urgent as previously stated.^{62/} CINCPACAF then told CINCPAC the full COMMANDO FLASH contingency force was necessary and the 405 TFW would stand down from its normal mission since it was a one-squadron wing.^{63/}

(S) The rest of the COMMANDO FLASH package deployed from Clark AB to SEAsia on 8 February. Four more airplanes went to each of three bases-- Da Nang, Ubon and Udorn. The aircraft and crews augmented existing squadrons at the three bases and did not form separate flying units until later.* COMMANDO FLASH/523 TFS elements at their different bases first flew combat missions in the 12-13 February time frame.^{64/}

*When the offensive began, the U.S. Command decided to consolidate the 523 TFS at one base in Thailand. See below, pp. 36, 37.

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(S) General Creighton Abrams notified CINCPAC on 25 February that the COMMANDO FLASH aircraft allowed a significant USAF sortie increase capability. This capability was in fact used immediately in the "air offensive on the B-3 and B-5 fronts, and again in the attacks against the 130mm guns." General Abrams said the attacks "probably aided in delaying the launching of the assault phase of the enemy campaign."

(S) The increased tacair resources also aided the air campaign in northern Laos in the defense of Long Tieng. During the following weeks, General Abrams believed that the U.S. had to maintain the "most capable posture to meet any enemy initiatives." He therefore requested a 30 day extension of COMMANDO FLASH deployment authority until the then present "uncertainties as to enemy intentions are resolved."^{65/} The JCS authorized the extension of the 405 TFS TDY until 7 April 1972.^{66/}

(S) As April approached and the enemy buildup continued with increasingly ominous signs, General Lavelle requested an additional 30 day extension to 7 May. He told General Abrams that enemy activity had not diminished and, in fact, 7AF expected it to actually increase in intensity.^{67/} General Abrams forwarded the request to CINCPAC, noting that the threat still existed, and pointing out that the offensive had not occurred was "largely attributable to our air offensive against [the enemy's] buildup and staging areas." Abrams felt that ARVN cross-border operations in the MR III, and the "pre-emptive ground operations"

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in MRs I and II, had increased the enemy logistics problems and hurt the NVA forces already positioned within the RVN.^{68/} Even so the NVN had continued their buildup since a previous MACV assessment on 8 March.^{69/} Since they could launch major offensive action at any time, the Allied ground and air activity needed to continue at the highest possible intensity. For these reasons Abrams seconded Lavelle's request for a 30-day extension of COMMANDO FLASH.^{70/} The CINCPAC also concurred and told the JCS and the Chairman of the JCS (CJCS) that the continued presence of U.S. augmented air units would help keep the enemy off balance by "striking his buildup and staging areas."^{71/}

Accordingly, the JCS approved the extension of COMMANDO FLASH to 7 May and authorized CINCPAC to temporarily exceed the Thailand manpower ceiling.^{72/} By that time the NVA Spring Offensive was underway, and the pattern of frequently increasing the Thailand manpower ceiling to accommodate the augmentations was beginning to emerge. This pattern had been given additional impetus by another deployment in the first phase of the U.S. air build-up.

COMMANDO FLY and Navy Deployments

The rationale for this, and subsequent, deployments was established earlier in 1972 as the enemy intentions became clearer. Early in February CINCPAC, in response to 7AF and COMUSMACV inputs, asked the JCS/CJCS for broad authority to hit airfields, surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites, ground controlled intercept (GCI) sites, 133mm gun emplacements, troop concentrations,

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and storage locations both within and outside NVN. The objective in requesting this authority was to halt or deter the threatened offensive. The U.S. command expected the Communists to operate under cover of darkness when protective reaction and interdiction strikes were least effective. One of the newer, more deadly weapons, the laser guided bomb (LGB), was not as effective at night. The CINCPAC message requested authority to strike the above listed targets whether or not the enemy fired at U.S. aircraft. The strikes were to be permitted when the targets were located--in other words they would become targets of opportunity.^{73/}

~~(TS)~~ The JCS answered that a high-level conference in Washington on 2 February had dealt with the SEAsia situation. The conferees, presumably including White House representatives, discussed the Vietnam war in detail in "terms of [the] threat, possible courses of action, counteractions taken by GVN and U.S. commands, resource availability, authorities, etc." Consequently, Admiral Moorer directed the implementation of OPLAN C101 (discussed above) and authorized COMUSMACV to increase B-52 sorties from 1000 to 1200 per month. Within one week Moorer expected that he would be able to permit McCain and Abrams to take further augmentation actions to include: deployment of an additional attack carrier (CVA) to SEAsia; deployment of another F-4 squadron from Okinawa or Korea; positioning more B-52s in Guam to permit an increase of 300 Arc Light sorties per month (to 1500); increasing the Thai manpower ceilings to accommodate the anticipated deployments; removal of "all existing sortie restrictions for both B-52 and [tacair] missions until further notice;" and an adjustment to

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"specific instructions with respect to air authorities you have requested in [NVN] and the northern part of the DMZ." A separate message was to direct a 48-hour air offensive in the B-3 Front to (1) destroy enemy personnel and material, and (2) "make it clear to the enemy that his offensive [would] be strongly resisted." The time restraints were related to the President's China trip, but Moorer promised that, if a tactical emergency developed between 17 February and 1 March, the restrictions would "no doubt be lifted,"^{74/} The CINCPAC request for the greatly increased operating authorities was in effect refused, but Moorer softened the refusal with the following statement:^{75/}

I assure you that your requirements, evaluations, and recommendations are being brought to the attention of our [CINC]. He is giving Southeast Asia much personal attention despite his many activities elsewhere. The difficulties inherent in the double task of defending against a major enemy attack while, at the same time, executing a rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces is well-recognized by all the Joint Chiefs who will render all support possible.

~~(S)~~ Later on in February, General Lavelle had asked again for early additional augmentation to counter the NVN threat. General Clay told Lavelle that he understood the 7AF Commander's concern, but he expected non-concurrence by the JCS. There were, Clay said, some political and economic considerations at stake; however, if there was a significant increase in ground activity, it would then be necessary to divert U.S. air assets from the COMMANDO HUNT VII interdiction campaign. General Clay advised General Lavelle that he was prepared to execute OPLAN C103, COMMANDO FLY,

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when he received a formal request which the JCS would have to approve in turn.^{76/} The JCS found no reason to order the deployment of COMMANDO FLY at that time.

~~(S)~~ The tacair assets remained basically stable throughout the rest of February, but in March the U.S. Command moved more naval air units to SEAsia. Throughout January and February the Navy kept three CVAs on station with approximately 60 tactical strike aircraft per carrier. Counting regenerating time spent off-station, the Navy CVAs maintained approximately a 1.4 on-station rate. The carriers in SEAsia after the Enterprise left on 24 January were the Constellation, the Coral Sea, and the Hancock. In anticipation of the buildup, the Navy deployed the Kitty Hawk three weeks early, and it arrived for its first flying day on 9 March. The Constellation was to have gone back to the U.S. after 22 March but it was brought back from Japan when the offensive began. By 8 April there were four CVAs on station off Vietnam.^{77/}

~~(S)~~ The planning began in February for COMMANDO FLY even though the deployment did not come until later. On 6 February CINCPACAF requested that 5th, 7th, and 13th Air Forces initiate planning for deployment of nine F-105Ds, one F-105G, and one to three squadrons of F-4Ds. It was possible, he said, that one of the squadrons of F-4s would deploy within three days. The F-105s would go to Korat; two of the F-4 squadrons would go to Udorn and one to Korat. For planning purposes, General Clay also wanted to know what the possibilities were for Da Nang, Ubon and Nakhon Phanom (NKP). He cautioned that this information was extremely sensitive.^{78/}

(TS) The F-4 squadrons were to have come from two separate wings-- the 3d and the 18th TFWs at Kunsan and Osan ABs in Korea. In order of priority, the 36 TFS, 35 TFS, and the 80 TFS would deploy in that sequence. The first squadron was at Osan; the other two were at Kunsan. If only one squadron went, they would deploy to the same bases as COMMANDO FLASH--Da Nang, ^{79/} Ubon and Udorn.

(TS) By 19 February the U.S. command was concerned enough to request JCS grant CINCPAC the authority to move one 18UE F-4 squadron from Korea to Clark preparatory to an anticipated deployment to SEAsia. CINCPAC also requested permission to move the F-4s to SEAsia when needed. ^{80/} The move to Clark was to allow the initiation of crew training and give them theater indoctrination. If there was only a short stay at Clark, 5AF was to keep operational control until the aircraft were actually in SEAsia. If the stay at Clark was prolonged, then 13AF would probably take operational control. The 35 TFS from Kunsan was mentioned as the tasked unit for the "impending deployment," and the possibility of prepositioning at Clark was "likely." ^{81/}

(TS) The JCS granted authority on 16 March for CINCPAC to deploy COMMANDO FLY (18UE F-4Ds without the command element) to Clark preparatory to moving on to SEAsia. As expected, the mission unit was the 35 TFS from the 3 TFW at Kunsan. The JCS also ordered 18 F-4Cs from Okinawa to Kunsan to cover the 35 TFS mission in Korea should Admiral McCain execute OPLAN C103. ^{82/} The CINCPAC did not act on this authority, however, until the NVA attacked at the end of March.

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(TS) When the NVA offensive broke, McCain ordered CINCPACAF to execute COMMANDO FLY. Fifth Air Force was to send 18 Electronic Countermeasures (ECM) pod-configured F-4Ds to Clark where they were to be readied for SEAsia combat. Preliminary planning called for nine aircraft each to go to Da Nang and Ubon. Public affairs guidance provided by the Secretary of Defense said that, if queried, U.S. commanders could say that the move was a limited and temporary realignment of tactical warfare assets in WESTPAC to maintain the capability to protect our personnel during the withdrawal. Commanders were not to discuss numbers, but the figure of 69,000 people left in Vietnam by 1 May still held.^{83/}

(TS) Then, on 1 April, CINCPAC directed CINCPACAF to deploy 18 COMMANDO FLY F-4Ds of the 35th TFS to SEAsia.^{84/} General Clay directed 13AF to send nine of the planes to Ubon and Da Nang respectively.^{85/} The COMMANDO FLY aircraft, crews, support personnel and equipment closed at their receiving bases by 3 April. The planes and crews first flew combat missions on 8 April.^{86/} At the same time a squadron of F-4Cs deployed from Okinawa to Kunsan to replace the 35 TFS.^{87/} No command element went with COMMANDO FLY since, like COMMANDO FLASH, the deploying planes and personnel augmented host wing squadrons.

(TS) The situation in the RVN was still so serious that on 4 April General Clay notified 5AF at Fuchu, Japan, that the remaining OPLAN C103 assets of the 3 TFW (26UE F-4Ds) had to be prepared for a 48-hour notice deployment. This required that the 3 TFW standdown from training and prepare

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estimates of their airlift requirements. Even though the COMMANDO FLY movement had degraded the 3 TFW's capability for additional deployments, the critical situation in SEAsia might still require the other 26 F-4s. In that case, 7AF was to decide where the additional resources would go.^{88/} CINCPACAF, however, released the 3 TFW from the 48-hour alert on 5 April, but directed that they continue deployment preparations by insuring that the aircraft were ECM-configured and RHAW-equipped.*

~~(TS)~~ The 7AF Commander, nevertheless, requested that CINCPACAF augment SEAsia tacair strength with the remaining OPLAN C103 aircraft. He wanted 18 of the F-4s at Ubon and eight at Da Nang, and, at the same time, recommended redeploying the 10 B-57Gs from Ubon out of SEAsia. General Lavelle also asked that (1) the F-105 WILD WEASEL (IRON HAND) strength at Korat be increased to 23 UE aircraft; (2) the SEAsia KC-135 strength be raised to 48 planes; and (3) the EB-66 total be increased to 21 airframes. The tankers would go to U-Tapao and the F-105s and EB-66s to Korat. Both CINCPAC and COMUSMACV had asked what additional air power augmentation 7AF needed.^{89/}

~~(TS)~~ It quickly became obvious to the U.S. Command that the outright invasion of the RVN by most of the NVN constituted perhaps the most serious threat of the entire war. Not only were Vietnamization and the Thieu government threatened, but over 70,000 Americans were in danger of being overrun. The political, military and foreign policy implications

*RHAW-Radar Homing and Warning.

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of such an occurrence were evident. Since it was practically a foregone conclusion that President Nixon would not reintroduce ground forces into RVN at that time, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) secured approval for and ordered an even more rapid buildup of U.S. tactical airpower in SEAsia.^{90/} To facilitate this, CINCPACAF decided to realign and consolidate the COMMANDO FLASH and COMMANDO FLY deployments.*

(TS) The SECDEF had ordered the deployment of one 12UE F-105G squadron and two 18UE F-4E squadrons from the continental U.S. (CONUS). Only Thailand bases were to be used for the new unit moves. The Air Staff suggested that one of the F-4 squadrons and the 12 F-105Gs go to Korat. They also wanted SEAsia air commanders' recommendations on (1) moving the Ubon B-57s to Clark; (2) expediting the Airborne Command and Control Center (ABCCC) move to Korat if desired; (3) moving some EC-121s to NKP; and (4) sending some COMMANDO FLASH and FLY aircraft to Da Nang. Two more F-4 squadrons were also deploying to that base from Japan.^{91/}

(C) By 6 April the CINCPACAF had decided to reconstitute COMMANDO FLASH and FLY resources as squadrons as soon as possible. General Clay ordered the moves as follows: nine COMMANDO FLY F-4Ds at Ubon were to go to Da Nang to consolidate the 35 TFS assets; six COMMANDO FLASH F-4Ds had to move from Da Nang and Ubon to Udorn where, with the six already in place, they would reconstitute the 523 TFS from the 4 TFW at Clark.^{92/} The realignments of COMMANDO FLASH and COMMANDO FLY took place simultaneously

*See below, p. 51, for the USMC deployments.

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to ease the impact of the deployments as much as possible. The moves of all aircraft, personnel, equipment and command elements (from Clark and Kunsan in the latter instance) were scheduled for 9-10 April.^{93/}

~~(S)~~ The beddown location of COMMANDO FLASH (Udorn) and FLY (Da Nang) did not change until June when the third phase deployments began as a direct result of increment #12 of the RVN drawdown.* CINCPAC authorized an extension of both OPLAN C101 and C103 deployments on 3 April 1972;^{94/} the extension was renewed again (until 30 June) on 7 June.^{95/}

~~(S)~~ At one point in the realignment, the COMMANDO FLASH aircraft were consolidated at two bases (12 at Udorn and six at Ubon). The six COMMANDO FLASH F-4s, along with the nine COMMANDO FLY F-4s at Ubon, were initially ordered to Udorn; however, on 9 April, they were all airborne when the beddown location of the nine COMMANDO FLY F-4s was suddenly changed to Da Nang. This caused some confusion and rapid reshuffling of support personnel and equipment, but the original consolidation schedule was achieved smoothly and without further incident.^{96/}

*See below, Chapter IV.

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CHAPTER IV

U.S. AIR DEPLOYMENTS - SECOND PHASE

(U) The U.S. air power posture in SEAsia had been dramatically reduced due to the withdrawal. When the NVN offensive broke, it became evident that there was an urgent need for an immediate, massive infusion of tactical airpower.

~~(S)~~ The U.S. Command had reduced the number of tactical air bases in SEAsia by four--all in the RVN. Even though there had been no change in the number of U.S.-occupied bases in Thailand as of 1 April 1972, the overall strike force total declined by 160 aircraft in SEAsia to approximately 375 planes.^{97/} Most U.S. airpower was dedicated to the interdiction effort in southern Laos, but the invasion of 30 March required that all available strike forces in Thailand, RVN and the South China Sea concentrate on the tactical emergency (TAC-E). Those forces were not enough; COMMANDO FLASH and COMMANDO FLY were not enough. It became necessary to draw on CONUS resources in accordance with TAC OPLAN 100, nick-named CONSTANT GUARD. This deployment had three phases--CONSTANT GUARD I, II, and III. Coupled with USN, USMC and SAC deployments, CONSTANT GUARD was the largest tactical airpower deployment in history over a similar time period.

CONSTANT GUARD I

~~(S)~~ As early as February, U.S. commanders had exchanged messages regarding PACOM air resources available for possible deployment. Within

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a short period these resources were being tapped to counter the NVN buildup. Shortly after the NVA invaded South Vietnam, PACOM assets had been utilized to the maximum extent possible consistent with national security interests in the Pacific area. In view of the TAC-E as of 4 April, the U.S. Command began exploring the possibility of deploying additional airpower.^{98/} Within an extremely short time the JCS ordered the string of TACAIR deployments, the nick-name for which was CONSTANT GUARD I.^{99/}

~~On~~ On 5 April General Abrams made an urgent request for additional TACAIR deployments.^{100/} The JCS response was immediate. That same day they ordered the deployment of one CONUS-based F-105G squadron consisting of 12 UE aircraft, logistics and personnel to Korat RTAFB. They further authorized CINCPAC to exceed the manpower ceiling in Thailand, but the unit was not to enter the country until COMUSMACTHAI obtained the country clearance.^{101/} The COMUSMACTHAI, Maj Gen Evans, did this on 6 April before the 561 TFS deployed from McConnell AFB, Kansas.^{102/} At approximately the same time as the F-105 directive went out, the JCS also ordered the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) to deploy immediately two CONUS tactical fighter squadrons along with their logistics and personnel to Thailand. The temporary duty (TDY) period was to be 90 days. The two squadrons were the 334/336 TFSs (36 UE F-4E aircraft) from the 4 TFW at Seymour-Johnson AFB, N. C.^{103/}

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~~(S)~~ At 1930L, 5 April, the 561 TFS (F-105Gs) was alerted to the possibility of deployment to SEAsia. This was confirmed by 2100L and the first airlift of 561st support personnel and equipment began on 6 April. The 561st deployed their F-105s from McConnell in three cells of four aircraft each, beginning on 7 April (CONUS date).^{104/} The last airlift aircraft closed at Korat RTAFB on 16 April (SEAsia date), but the 561st had been flying combat missions for four days. On 12 April the squadron had three F-105Gs operationally ready at Korat and they flew sorties that day.^{105/} The four-plane cells arrived at Korat on 10, 11, and 12 April.^{106/}

~~(C)~~ The 388TFW at Korat was among the first SEAsia units to encounter rapid and extensive deployments. Actually the 388th had already absorbed additional units earlier as part of the deployment from RVN as well as in anticipation of a possible offensive buildup. The 39 ARRS (7 UE HC-130s) had moved to Korat in March and the 7 Airborne Command and Control Squadron (ACCS) (12 C-130s) arrived there just before and during the CONSTANT GUARD I deployment. These moves helped the 388 TFW prepare for CONSTANT GUARD in that it gave experience in adjusting rapidly to similar contingencies.^{107/} This practical knowledge served the 388th well. The initial indication that the 561st was deploying to Korat came during the night of 7-8 April.^{108/} By 8 April the first airlift missions began to arrive; some of the people and equipment were to support the two F-4 squadrons which were also inbound to Thailand. At first the 388th officials believed this to be a mistake; however, later

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information revealed that there had been a last-minute change to TAC/OPLAN 100.*^{109/} These people and their equipment re-embarked for their final destination on 9 April.^{110/}

(S) Besides the 561 TFS, the 388 TFW was also the host for another element of CONSTANT GUARD I. This was the deployment of eight EB-66s to provide electronic warfare (EW) support for the increased ARC LIGHT sortie level during the offensive.

(S) The 42nd Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron (TEWS) had 13 EB-66s for EW when the offensive broke. The 42 TEWS required 17 aircraft to support just the current level of B-52 strikes, so it needed four more immediately even without an increase in Arc Light missions. Consequently on 27 March the CSAF directed TAC to deploy two EB-66Es to Korat, and on 4 April ordered two more, an EB-66C and an EB-66E, to the same location. The four planes, which began deploying on 7 April, replaced lost or damaged aircraft and brought the 42 TEWS strength back to 17 planes. They were not, however, part of the CONSTANT GUARD I package even though concurrent with it.^{111/}

(S) Due to the criticality of the tactical situation early in April, General Abrams asked not only for more tacair resources, but more B-52 sortie capability as well.^{112/} At the same time he also requested more EW support for the ARC LIGHT aircraft, and he stressed the immediacy of

*See below, pp. 43-44 for discussion of the 334/336 TFS deployment, also part of CGI.

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the need.^{113/} Pending JCS approval, TAC told 9AF that Shaw AFB, S. C., to prepare four EB-66E crews, support personnel and equipment for deployment. This was on 6 April.^{114/} On 7 April the JCS ordered the four EB-66s deployed to SEAsia as part of CONSTANT GUARD. They left their CONUS base beginning on 10 April and closed at Korat on 16 April augmenting the 42d TEWS to a strength of 21 UE aircraft. The Joint Chiefs again gave the Air Force authority to exceed the manpower ceiling by as many people as necessary to support the deployment.^{115/}

(S) The first operational mission for the deployed EB-66s in SEAsia was on 13 April. Two of them had arrived at Korat by then and both were operationally ready (OR). The number of people deployed with the eight TEWS aircraft included 18 crewmembers and 70 support personnel.

(S) The 88 TDY EB-66 personnel added to 29 F-105 aircrew members and 344 others who deployed with the 561 TFS totaled 461 personnel at Korat under CONSTANT GUARD I. Because of the short-notice deployment and inadequate coordination between the deploying and receiving units, the 561 TFS came to SEAsia with excess equipment.^{116/} This situation was generally repetitive with the other elements of CONSTANT GUARD I and in CONSTANT GUARD II as well.*

(S) CONSTANT GUARD I also included the deployment of two 18 UE F-4E squadrons (the 334/336 TFSs) to Ubon RTAFB. On 5 April the JCS had ordered

*See below, pp. 45-46.

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the CSAF to deploy two squadrons ^{117/} and TAC had accordingly executed OPLAN 100 to accomplish the move. The 4 TFW at Seymour Johnson AFB began launching the F-4Es in six-plane cells on 8 April. Three cells each day, 30 minutes apart, deployed on the 8th and 9th. The OPLAN gave no final destination for the two squadrons, but all profiles were computed for Korat. ^{118/} Unfortunately the 388TFW at Korat was not an addressee on Frag Order 72-3 to OPLAN 100 and 13AF did not transmit it to them until 10 April, ^{119/} two days after the first support elements for the 334 TFS arrived at Korat and on the same day as the redeployment of those elements to Ubon. The 388th had made no preparations to receive these unscheduled "augmentees." In a six-hour period on 8 April, six C-141s carrying 197 personnel and 115,000 pounds of cargo had been unloaded at Korat. Late that same day, ^{120/} CINCPACAF diverted all subsequent 334/336 TFS airlift to Ubon.

~~(S)~~ Before that, however, TAC had made another change which temporarily confused the picture even more. On 7 April, TAC/DO issued change #1 to OPLAN 100. This change listed the final destination of the 334 TFS as Korat and that of the 336 TFS as Udorn RTAFB. ^{121/} The next day TAC finally provided the final destination for the two F-4E squadrons in Change #2 to OPLAN 100. The 334/336 TFSs were to go to Ubon and MAC was to provide the airlift of those 334th elements from Korat to Ubon. ^{122/} Part of the confusion existed because of the 13 Bomb Squadron, Tactical (BST), at Ubon. The 13 BST with 10 B-57Gs was being considered for redeployment but had not yet left SEAsia.

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~~(S)~~ Originally CINCPACAF suggested that the 334 TFS go to Ubon while the 336 TFS went to Udorn. This was based on an expected SECDEF--approval for the 13 BST to redeploy to Clark. If he did not allow it, then the PACAF chief felt that 334th should go to Korat instead.^{123/} Apparently TAC issued Change #1 later in the day on 7 April based on the assumption that the B-57s would not leave Ubon soon enough. It was finally decided on 8 April that the 13 BST would redeploy from Ubon by 11 April and the 7ACCS would move to Korat from Udorn, freeing the latter base for deployments under CONSTANT GUARD II.^{124/} The 334/336 TFSs both closed at Ubon on 11 and 12 April, respectively, and began flying missions on 14 and 15 April. Both squadrons deployed a total of over 1040 personnel.^{125/}

(U) The overall opinion of the deploying and receiving unit commanders was that the CONSTANT GUARD I operation went smoothly under the conditions. One squadron operations officer said, "It was the smoothest deployment I have ever been on."^{126/} The deployments themselves did go extremely well; however, the short lead time brought on by the tactical emergency caused some problems.

~~(S)~~ The host wings at Korat and Ubon had no time to coordinate with the deploying units so significant amounts of airlift assets were used to deploy excess equipment and personnel. At Ubon the 8 TFW identified approximately 190,000 pounds of excess maintenance equipment that had to be shipped back because there was no way to use it nor store it satisfactorily.^{127/} The wing had not planned to receive an augmentation of the size that came.

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The only planning they had ever been told to do was for PACAF OPLANS C-101 and C-103, which were not on the scale of CONSTANT GUARD I. The CONUS units deployed with the capability to operate at a limited base; the receiving bases were main operating bases--hence the excesses. ^{128/}

(U) At Korat the situation was not as embrangling because the 388th received the units it was supposed to get and with fewer last-minute changes. Korat did not have to send out portions of several units (COMMANDO FLASH/COMMANDO FLY) or an entire squadron (the 13 BST) as did Ubon. Korat, like Ubon, had to redeploy excess equipment and personnel because the short lead time caused the 561 TFS to deploy bare-base equipped. The 388th shipped 450 line items back to McConnell AFB. ^{129/}

CONSTANT GUARD II

(U) CONSTANT GUARD II followed close on the heels of CONSTANT GUARD I. CONSTANT GUARD II consisted of two 18 UE F-4E squadrons which deployed from CONUS bases to Udorn RTAFB. There was far less confusion on the final destination compared to CONSTANT GUARD I.

~~(S)~~ On 26 April the JCS directed that the CSAF and TAC deploy two more F-4 squadrons to Thailand under OPLAN 100. TAC subsequently published Frag Order 72-4 to the OPLAN. The Frag Order tasked the 31 TFW at Homestead AFB, Fla., to deploy the 308 TFS on 27 April (CONUS date), and the 33 TFW at Eglin AFB, Fla., was to send the 58 TFS in six 3-plane cells on 28-29 April. ^{130/} The host was to be the 432 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing (TRW); however, the wing was not on the list of addressees to which the Frag Order

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was sent--even as an info recipient. This did not present any major problems though.

~~(S)~~ The 308 TFS deployed 18 F-4Es on 28 April and all but one reached Udorn on 1 May. The other had maintenance problems and arrived on 2 May. The squadron had 14 aircraft OR on 5 May and flew its first combat missions on the same day. They deployed 588 aircrew and support personnel. ^{131/}

~~(S)~~ The 58 TFS sent the same number of F-4Es in 3-plane cells on 28-29 April. All 18 reached Udorn by 2 May and 17 were OR on the 5th when the squadron flew its first combat missions. The 58th brought 461 personnel to Thailand. These people, plus the ones of the 308 TFS and additional PACAF TDY troops, totaled over 1100 personnel deployed to Udorn as part of CONSTANT GUARD II. ^{132/}

~~(S)~~ The planning at the 432 TRW was further advanced than for CONSTANT GUARD I. The Udorn wing had already planned for and received COMMANDO FLASH and FLY elements. The COMMANDO FLASH squadron (the 523 TFS) had reformed at Udorn before CONSTANT GUARD II began.* In addition the 432d had begun planning in February under Programmed Action Directive (PAD) 72-13-2 to receive two squadrons from Da Nang, possibly in May. This planning and preparation was partially implemented with the COMMANDO FLASH/FLY deployments. When CONSTANT GUARD II came, the 432d executed more of their PAD 72-13-2 plans early to accept the 308th and 58 TFSs. ^{133/}

*See above, Chapter III.

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(S) As with CONSTANT GUARD I, the two squadrons of CONSTANT GUARD II deployed with excess maintenance support equipment. This was primarily due to the squadrons being from separate wings. The 58th had 570 excess line items and the 308th had a similar amount. The wing had been told the squadrons were coming bare-base equipped, but at the last minute this was changed without informing the receiving unit. Consequently furniture, bedding, beds, non-specialized vehicles, foot lockers and the like were in extremely short supply. The 7 ACCS had deployed to Korat leaving building space, but no furniture. The 432 TRW had to request support from Harvest Eagle Kits at Ching Chung Kang (CCK) AB, Taiwan, and rented the necessary vehicles on the local economy. Housing facilities, taxiways, ramp space, maintenance workload--all were near saturation after the CONSTANT GUARD II deployment.^{134/}

(S) Nevertheless, the CONSTANT GUARD II deployments was relatively smoother than the first of the series. None of the deploying units had anything but praise for the airlift portions of the deployment. The deploying and host unit commanders praised the professionalism of the entire move.^{135/}

CONSTANT GUARD III

(S) This part of CONSTANT GUARD differed basically from I and II in that an entire four-squadron wing (the 49 TFW from Holloman AFB, N. M.) deployed to a bare-base environment. The USAF closed out operations at Takhli RTAFB in 1971 and turned the base over to the Thais on 31 March of

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that year. At that time there was "very little intention of ever re-entering."^{136/}

~~(TS)~~ The JCS began consideration of CONSTANT GUARD III early in April just after the offensive began. On 10 April the JCS directed the Joint Staff to begin planning for a possible deployment of up to four more squadrons of F-4s and up to 16 KC-135s to one particular base--possibly Takhli--and up to three more F-4 squadrons at Nam Phong. The latter was an American-built bare-base that had never been officially opened.* CINCPAC was to plan for the possible "reactivation"*** of Takhli for the four squadrons of F-4s and one of KC-135s. Admiral McCain told the JCS on 12 April that USAF re-entry into Takhli was feasible for both types of aircraft.^{137/}

~~(TS)~~ On 8 April the CSAF had given the 49 TFW a "no action" warning notice of a possible "one or more" squadron deployment. The warning was limited to only a few individuals in the wing and said nothing about deploying the entire wing, but it did mention the possible destination as being Takhli.^{138/} The CINC, Readiness Command (US-CINCRED), recommended on 12 April that the four squadrons be sent to Takhli. He also urged sending the 308 TFS, 58 TFS (both CONSTANT GUARD II), and the 335 TFS (another Seymour Johnson based unit) to Nam Phong.^{139/}

*There was a highly classified training program at Nam Phong.

**There was no "reactivation;" the base had never been closed. The RTAF had fighter operations there besides a basic training center. There was also a USAF Security Service operation at Takhli.

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(S) Thirteenth Air Force likewise received notice early in April about the pending move. CINCPAC told them to prepare for the reopening of a base in SEAsia by identifying by name approximately 800 PACAF personnel of different skills for the initial cadre. The exact location was still highly classified and the alerted cadre did not know it until May. ^{140/}

(S) The JCS was actually looking at several bases in RVN in addition to the Thailand bases. These included some recently-closed or phasing-down bases, such as Phu Cat, Cam Ranh Bay, Phan Rang, and Tuy Hoa. There was also some consideration of reintroducing a squadron of RF-4Cs to Tan Son Nhut. ^{141/}

(S) At approximately 2300 hours on 3 May the CSAF notified the 49 TFW that the entire wing was to deploy to Takhli. ^{142/} At the same time the Site Preparatory Task Force, consisting of approximately 800 PACAF augmentees, was ordered to proceed to Takhli. The initial party went to Korat where they waited until the Thais gave them clearance to proceed to Takhli. The advance party arrived at the base on 5 May which was the first of the Thai four-day holiday. No one had told the Thai commander the Americans were coming so the local RTAF people were not expecting them. Once this confusion was cleared up, the Site Task Force began to prepare Takhli for the 49 TFW's arrival. ^{143/}

(S) The nick-name for this phase of the various deployments was COMMANDO FREIGHT. This included CONSTANT GUARD III and the re-institution of USAF operations at Takhli. D-Day for the actual deployment was 5 May

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and the first squadron was to close at Takhli on D-Day plus 5. A 16 UE KC-135 squadron also deployed from Altus AFB, Okla., to Takhli to support the increased tacair sortie level in SEAsia.^{144/} CINCPACAF turned down a 13AF request to slip D-Day from 5 May to 6 May because of the Thai holiday.^{145/}

~~(S)~~ The deployment of the 49 TFW was the largest single unit TAC move in USAF history. The Director of Operations, with an advance party, left Holloman on 6 May. The wing's four squadrons deployed on each of four days, beginning with the 417 TFS on 7 May. The 7th, 8th and 9th TFSs left on 8, 9, and 10 May respectively. The squadrons began arriving at Takhli on 10 May and the 72d closed there on 14 May.* The 49 TFW flew its first combat missions (six sorties in RVN) on 11 May, less than 24 hours after the 417 TFS arrived at Takhli. The squadron had 15 OR aircraft on station that day. The wing deployed 3034 personnel from Holloman; PACAF sent 742 augmentees; SAC dispatched 369; and 271 others came from other locations--making a total of 4416 personnel at Takhli by 19 May. The 49th was flying a 1.0 frag rate within five days after the last squadron got to Takhli.^{146/}

~~(S)~~ The major problems faced by the Site Preparatory Task Force and the wing were mainly those which did not limit the effectiveness of the unit. There were not enough vehicles and the Air Force had to rent or contract for 324 general-purpose vehicles due to PACAF shortages. The 49th was informed there would be enough of these vehicles; consequently,

*There were 71 F-4s at Takhli on 13 May. The 72d had engine problems at Guam and came a day later.

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they did not deploy those belonging to the wing. By comparison the SAC tanker squadron knew of the shortage and brought their own. The wing expected a normal airlift package, but MAC was using a combination of C-5s and C-141s, so there were some personnel and equipment imbalances due to loading changes. This situation was offset by the increased flexibility provided by the aircraft mix. Fewer airplanes were needed and the 49 TFW commander had high praise for the C-5/C-141 airlift package.*^{147/} The base was in need of extensive rehabilitation and there were temporary shortages of power, water, useable living quarters, air conditioners (for high heat-producing/temperature-sensitive equipment) and dining halls. None of these had an effect on the operational readiness of the wing and most of the shortages were corrected within a month after the deployment.^{148/}

U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Deployments

~~SECRET~~ When the U.S. Command was exploring the available means and resources for additional tacair sortie levels, the USN and the USMC were asked to estimate their capabilities. In response to a February CINCPAC query, Admiral Clarey (CINCPACFLT) said that an appreciable increase of CVA sortie levels could be generated only by increasing the number of carriers on station. At that time there were three CVAs in West PAC, and they could deliver up to 2100 sorties per carrier per month in an emergency. The normal sortie generation rate for CVAs was 70 percent of assigned aircraft. The available carriers could be on station for up to a month in an emergency,

*Other units which utilized the C-5/C-141 mix also praised it highly.

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but each would have to go off station in turn for about two weeks to regenerate. Clarey said he could have four carriers on station if the Enterprise were returned (it had left SEAsia on 24 January), or if the Kitty Hawk came out early. The latter was expected on station within 25 days after 7 February (its CONUS-departure date).^{149/}

~~(S)~~ The Navy did bring the Kitty Hawk on station by 9 March, and the Constellation returned from Japan (it had started for home just before the offensive broke) by 8 April. On 6 April the JCS ordered CINCPAC to deploy the Midway with its carrier wing from East PAC to West PAC. This would augment the Seventh Fleet to a five-CVA posture^{150/} and would allow one to go to Subic Bay in the Philippines for recycling. The Midway arrived on Yankee Station and began flying combat missions on 30 April. On 8 April the JCS directed CINCLANT to deploy the USS Saratoga from Mayport, R. I., to SEAsia for further augmentation/relief of the Seventh Fleet.^{151/} The Saratoga flew its first combat missions during the offensive on 18 May. This made a total of six CVAs on station or at Subic Bay through the first part of June.^{152/}

~~(S)~~ On 27 May CINCPAC ordered the Oriskany to deploy to West PAC on 5 June to replace the long delayed Constellation. Admiral McCain also told Admiral Clarey to assume operational control of the USS America which had deployed from the U.S. east coast to relieve the Coral Sea. The Oriskany launched its first combat sorties against the NVA on 27 June and the America sent off its first missions on 13 July. These deployments allowed the Navy

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to keep at least four CVAs on station at all times. Two other aircraft haulers, the Ticonderoga and the Okinawa, were on station or nearby, but the former was an anti-submarine warfare carrier and the latter carried helicopters and Marines. ^{153/}

(C) The CINCPACFLT had advised CINCPAC in February that the 1 Marine Air Wing (MAW) at Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) was available to augment tacair resources in the event of a massive NVA push. MAW assets included 1605 aircrew and maintenance personnel plus the following units, aircraft types, and numbers: ^{154/}

MAG 12 - VMA 211 - A-4E - 17 UE
 VMA 311 - A-4E - 18 UE
 VMA(AW) - A-6 - 10 UE

MAG 13 - VMFA 115 - F-4B - 14 UE
 VMFA 232 - F-4J - 14 UE

(15) At the time, however, COMUSMACV and 7AF officials felt the Marine assets were not needed. If they were deployed, General Lavelle felt they should not be integrated with USAF units and perhaps could beddown at Phan Rang or Cam Ranh Bay. The 7AF commander also recommended the Marines not go to Thailand either. After Admiral McCain queried General Abrams for a definite beddown location if the Marine air units deployed, COMUSMACV decided on Cam Ranh Bay. Admiral McCain accepted that location at the time (February). ^{155/}

(16) All that changed when the NVA invaded South Vietnam late in March. On 5 April the JCS ordered CINCPAC to deploy the two F-4 squadrons from the 1 MAW at Iwakuni MCAS. They were to leave as soon as possible, but not

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earlier than 060200Z April and their destination was Da Nang AB, not Cam Ranh Bay. The Marine F-4s were to be used against the enemy in MR I and FREEDOM TRAIN operations in NVN. PACAF was to provide the necessary air-lift. ^{156/}

~~(S)~~ The Iwakuni F-4 units deployed to Da Nang beginning on 6 April. There were 11 there on that day; 11 arrived on the 7th and four more closed ^{157/} at Da Nang on 8 April. One F-4J was missing enroute and was never found. Later four special purpose TA-4s from Iwakuni also went to Da Nang. These deployments created extremely crowded parking problems at the frequently-rocketed air base. Some of the USAF OV-10s and O-2s relocated, thereby ^{158/} alleviating the crowding somewhat. By 11 April the newly-formed Marine Air Group (MAG) 15/Forward was flying combat missions with the 366 TFW out ^{159/} of Da Nang.

~~(S)~~ On 10 April CINCPAC ordered another USMC F-4 unit to deploy to Da Nang to augment MAG 15/Forward. The other unit (VMFA 212) deployed with 12 F-4Js and 300 personnel on 10-11 April from Kaneohe MCSAS, Hawaii. They arrived at Da Nang on 13 April and began flying combat missions with ^{160/} the other Marines by 17 April.

SAC Deployments

~~(S)~~ Very early in the offensive, General Abrams asked for more B-52s. The JCS immediately authorized SAC to send more of the big bombers to SEAsia. Shortly thereafter SAC made 16 KC-135s also available to support the rapid buildup of tacair and B-52 resources. At that time Don Muang RTAFB (also

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part of Bangkok International Airport) was mentioned as a possible beddown location for the tankers. ^{161/}

(U) Since USAF operations at Don Muang had been cut back to aerial port activity only, this indicated a growing problem that plagued much of the entire buildup. There was a serious lack of space in Thailand in which to beddown the rapidly increasing air assets. Until the deployments began, SAC bombers and tankers were based on Guam and at U-Tapao RTNAF. As those two bases began to fill up, space and facilities became serious problems. Early in the campaign the JCS decided, at the President's behest, not to allow large buildups in the RVN. This automatically put heavy pressure on the Thailand bases and manpower ceilings. Much of this pressure was evident in the SAC deployments.

(S) SAC moved some COMBAT LIGHTNING aircraft from U-Tapao to Kadena on 10-11 April to make room for more young Tiger (KC-135) planes. ^{162/}
On 1 April there were 50 B-52s at Anderson AFB, Gua, and 45 at U-Tapao. ^{163/}
There were 30 KC-135s at U-Tapao. By 9 April 13AF informed CINCPACAF that a maximum of 52 B-52s and 46 KC-135s could beddown at U-Tapao. That number of tankers would, however, meet the 7AF requirement of 48 refueling sorties per day. The 13AF planners warned, though, that if more tankers were needed, another base, or space at other bases, would also be necessary for them and more B-52s as well. ^{164/}
13AF recommended that the other bases might possibly be Clark, CCK, Kadena and Don Muang, in that order. The latter was mentioned as a last resort only. ^{165/}
On 14 April CINCPACAF asked

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CINCSAC to increase the tanker force at U-Tapao to 46 aircraft as soon as possible.^{166/} This was done and by 24 May U-Tapao had the previously recommended total of 46 KC-135s.^{167/}

~~(S)~~ Later the SEAsian air leaders asked for more tanker support as the tacair deployments continued. The JCS directed SAC to send 16 KC-135s to Takhli as a necessary supplement to CONSTANT GUARD III.* This was on 3 May and the first tanker and personnel arrived at Takhli on 15 May with the rest closing there on 16 and 17 May. This became Operating Location TC (OL-TC) of the 307 Strategic Wing (SW) at U-Tapao.^{168/} Later this unit became the 4101 Air Refueling Squadron (ARS). (See below, p. 64.)

~~(TS)~~ General Clay asked for 20 more KC-135s in mid-May to meet a requirement for 45 sorties per 24-hour strike period in NVN. He further proposed that 13 of the planes be bedded down at Don Muang with the rest (Z) at Clark. CINCPACAF further requested that CINCPAC obtain the country clearances to allow the planes and personnel to begin operations at Don Muang by 23 May.^{169/} CINCSAC alerted the 301 Aerial Refueling Wing on 18 May at Lockbourne AFB, Ohio, to ready 13 KC-135s and 23 aircrews for deployment to Don Muang as part of CONSTANT GUARD III. Don Muang was designated OL-D8 of the 307 SW.^{170/} The American Ambassador, however, attempted to have the move suspended, saying there might be an "adverse political impact" if combat support aircraft were introduced and made "highly visible" at the Thai civilian terminal.^{171/}

*See above, pp. 47.

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(70) The decision was finally made on 7 June when the JCS ordered the 13 tankers from Lockbourne to Don Muang. They were to begin the deployment on 10 June and close at Don Muang on 15 June. The Thais belatedly granted the country clearance one day before the deployment began. ^{172/}

(70) The rapidly growing SAC forces continued to cause a heavy flow of message traffic containing beddown proposals and counter-proposals. On 22 May 7AF suggested that the EB-66s at Korat be moved to Clark and replace them with 10 tankers. Clark and CCK were also suggested bases for more tankers, but 7AF noted that off-load capacities for the tankers were approximately halved by this alternative. The number at U-Tapao was to be raised by moving USN VPRONP-3 aircraft; and 7AF recommended putting ^{173/} 25 and 20 tankers at Clark and CCK respectively. The JCS, on 21 May, requested CINCPAC provide a suggested force beddown associated with the deployment of 100 more B-52s to SEA. CINCPACAF provided the following suggestions for the tankers:

56 - Don Muang
8 - Korat
20 - Takhli
25 - Clark
14 - CCK
123 - Total

General Vogt, 7AF commander, recommended putting 50 of the incoming B-52s at Andersen for immediate basing. The 8AF commander said he could do this by closing one runway, beginning major construction, and waiving certain safety requirements. ^{174/}

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~~(S)~~ The CINCPACAF next requested 20 more KC-135s to meet a 95-sortie per day requirement. This was on 24 May. There were then 73 tankers in theater: U-Tapao-46; Takhli-16; Clark-11. He wanted the following 93-plane force posture: U-Tapao-46; Takhli-20; Clark-11; Korat-3; Don Muang-13. The up-coming deployment from Da Nang created an additional requirement for even more tankers. If Don Muang were not one of the tanker OLs, CINCPACAF wanted 105 tankers (vice 93); then when Da Nang closed he asked for 138 tankers because of the increased distances the fighters would have to fly from Thailand to MR I and NVN.* CINCPAC advised that POL limitations would limit the increased beddown to 34 (in addition to the 73 on 27 May) for a total of 107 KC-135s.^{175/} This particular issue had not been resolved by the end of May.

Miscellaneous Deployments

~~(S)~~ Due to the enemy invasion of MRs III and IV, 7AF established a turn-around capability at Bien Hoa for up to 15 F-4 sorties effective 15 April. The concept was that F-4s would recover at Bien Hoa, refuel and rearm there, then make strikes enroute to their home bases. Since MRs III and IV were beyond the unrefueled range of the nearest F-4 support base, this would (1) make them more available for divers to support TAC-Es; (2) decrease tanker requirements and (3) increase the strike capability in the south.

*Because of reduced off-load capacities when flying from Clark and CCK, there was a corresponding increase in the number of tankers required.

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(S) Subsequent requirements at An Loc necessitated lifting the turn-around capability to 34 per day with a 65 per day surge capacity for an indefinite period. CONSTANT GUARD, 7AF and PACAF supplied the personnel, and equipment. The 65 per day capability began by 16 April when 63 sorties were regenerated. There was also an AC-119K FOL at Bien Hoa (six planes), later reduced to four aircraft. ^{176/}

(S) Other deployments either actually made or under consideration included the following:

- (a) Five EC-47s from Da Nang to NKP to make room for MAG-15/Forward. ^{177/}
- (b) Two WC-130s to Korat on 23 April. ^{178/}
- (c) Seven HC-130 P/Ns to Clark.
- (d) Twenty-two HH-53s to Tan Son Nhut, Da Nang, NKP and Ubon. ^{179/}

Summary

(S) At the end of the second phase of the U.S. tactical air deployments in response to the 1972 Communist offensive, the strike force in RVN had risen to 182 aircraft. In Thailand this figure was 443 for a total of 625 strike aircraft. This did not include an increase of 36 B-52s at Andersen AFB, Guam, to 86 planes. ^{180/} In the third phase the totals did not change as radically, but there was some shifting and increases as the Vietnam withdrawal continued.

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CHAPTER V

U.S. AIR DEPLOYMENTS-THIRD PHASE

(15) The NVN offensive stalled in June but there was no letup in the American air campaign to stop and defeat it above or below the DMZ. There was also planning and consideration being given to deploying more strike aircraft from the CONUS in the event there was no diplomatic or military break-through at Paris or on the battle field. The major U.S. air movements after May were those associated with the continuing drawdown in RVN.

Redeployment From Da Nang

(15) In January General Ryan (CSAF) advised Generals Clay and Lavelle that it would be best to handle the projected 4700 USAF FY73 TACAIR sorties out of Thai bases. This meant that the USAF fighter wing at Da Nang would have to be redeployed. General Ryan asked the PACAF and 7AF commanders to consider moving one of the 366 TFW's F-4 squadrons to Thailand and split another of the wing's 18 UE squadrons among three other Thai bases. At the same time the 390 TFS (at Da Nang) would redeploy to CONUS and an F-4D squadron from Thailand would also redeploy to make room for the newer F-4E's from the RVN base. An "air defense FOL" would remain at Da Nang under this proposal. ^{181/}

(15) After the offensive began another factor entered into the redeployment planning for Da Nang. This was the possibility that all MR I would be overrun by the NVA, forcing a sudden evacuation

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of all units, including the 366 TFW from the RVN. If this occurred, 7AF/XP had proposed a contingency plan, listing the redeployment bases for all USAF aircraft. CINCPAC would designate the relocation site for all USMC Squadrons. 182/

(S) In mid-May 13AF asked the 8 TFW and 432 TRW for their suggestions on what to do with aircraft from the 390 TFS (F4Ds) if it were returned to CONUS. The 13AF had originally recommended that 12 of the planes might go to Ubon and the other six to Udorn, but now changed its suggestion to a 9-9 split. 183/

(S) Shortly afterward, on 22 May, CINCPACAF decided it would propose moving the 366 TFW with the 4th and 421 TFSs to Takhli. This proposal in more definite form went to CINCPAC on 27 May. It called for the 366th to move to Takhli, with the 390 TFS moving to Mt Home AFB without personnel or equipment. Its 18 F-4Ds would be divided equally between Ubon and Udorn. The 35 TFS (COMMANDO FLY) was to go to Korat until the contingency was over when it would redeploy to lessen the crowding in Thailand. The 49 TFW collocated with the 366 TFW and were able to use the base support personnel provided by the 366 TFW. This way the 49th could concentrate on flying combat and expend less effort on base support while in a TDY status. CINCPACAF also pointed out that splitting the 390 TFS assets would save on tanker support, CINCPAC approved this proposal and PACAF advised 13AF that the move would be implemented approximately 15 June. The 49 TFW and the SAC tankers would continue to share Takhli as tenant

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units and the 6499 CSG (Provisional) would be inactivated. All of the changes would be made in time to meet the Increment #12 suspense date of 1 July. ^{184/}

~~(TS)~~ The other main tacair resources at Da Nang had to be moved also. These were the three units of MAG 15/Forward, which included 39 F-4Bs and Js with all personnel. Late in May it was decided by the JCS to open Nam Phong in northeastern Thailand and redeploy MAG 15/Forward to that site. The Thai government hesitated on granting the country clearance but still did so within 24 hours of the American request. ^{185/}

The country clearance included 4000 base operating support (BOS) Marines who were to be deployed to Nam Phong which would become an almost exclusively MCAS. The MAG-15/Forward would redeploy 1035 personnel plus their planes from Da Nang. The first Marine BOS troops began arriving at the base on 24 May. ^{186/}

~~(TS)~~ The 7th Fleet Commander asked that the actual deployment not commence before 15 June since it would take additional time to make Nam Phong more ready. It was marginally ready by 10 June, but the Marines wanted more effective coordination with the 366 TFW at Da Nang. There were two plans then under consideration for MAG-15/Forward that would possibly require a few extra days. Plan One was the straight forward, "as is" move of MAG-15/Forward to Nam Phong. Plan Two called for the replacement of VMFA 212 (Kaneohe F-4s) with VMA (AW) 533 (Iwakuni A-6s) to allow the former to return to its home base. The consolidation

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of the 1 MAW would also increase MAG 15/Forward's all-weather capability and reduce refueling requirements. If Plan 2 was effected, MAG 15/Forward would move between 15-20 June and VMA 533 would deploy from Iwakuni on 20 June. This is the course the Marine deployment ultimately took. Likewise a six-plane KC-130 force along with four Marine SAR CH-46's mover to Nam Phong.^{187/} The JCS, on 7 June, subsequently directed the Da Nang deployments. At the same time they announced that 41 more tankers were going to Thailand and the Philippines. The manpower ceiling in Thailand was simultaneously raised by 18,000 to 50,000 people.^{188/}

~~(S)~~ The 366 TFW began its deployment to Takhli on 13 June. The 390 TFS aircraft went to Thailand on 14 and 15 June, while the 421st redeployed to Takhli on 20 June. The 4 TFS left for the same destination on 25 June and the wing personnel went on 27 June when the 6498 ABW was created at Da Nang. MAG-15/Forward was gone from Da Nang by 28 June. Most of the fighters flew strike missions enroute to their beddown bases.^{189/}

~~(TS)~~ Another augmentation being discussed or planned for in May and June was the deployment of F-111's to SEAsia for a second time. There was a possibility that up to three 14 UE F-11 squadrons would deploy to Takhli from the 474 TFW at Nellis AFB, Nevada. One of these squadrons could beddown at Takhli with the 366th and 49 TFWs. CINCPACAF recommended sending an F-4 squadron home if this were done. The SEAsia

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planners also considered sending the 49 TFW home and replacing them with the entire F-111 wing. Nothing beyond plans had been formulated at the end of July.^{190/}

SAC Follow-On Deployments

(S) As the number of SAC aircraft built up in SEAsia, it became necessary to reorganize the units into a different line-up. Prior to June the parent organization at U-Tapao was the 307 Strategic Wing (SW). As a consequence of the buildup, SAC formed the 17 Strategic Aerospace Division (Provisional) (SAD) at U-Tapao on 1 June. Along with the 17 SAD, SAC also activated the 310 SW. All the B-52D's at the base were in the 307th and the KC-135's were placed in the 310th.

(S) Earlier the 16 tankers at Takhli* became part of the 4101 ARS and the tankers at Clark became the 4102 ARS. Before this the Takhli KC-135's had been part of an FOL from U-Tapao and those at Clark were operated by the Guam-based unit. In addition to the above unit activations, the tankers at Don Muang and Korat became the 4103 ARS and the 4104 ARS respectively. All were composed of TDY aircraft and personnel from various stateside units. The 17th consolidated all maintenance personnel and activities at U-Tapao into still another wing--the 340 Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Wing. All the units so created came under the 17 SAD as of 1 June 1972.^{191/}

See above, pp. 61-62.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

~~(S)~~ Long before the night of 29-30 March 1972, it became apparent that the NVN was going to try some spectacular military feat of arms. The indications were strong that it would affect part, if not all, of the RVN.

~~(S)~~ Despite public expressions of confidence in the progress of Vietnamization, the U.S. government recognized that, without American air power, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) would have only a minimal chance of staying off defeat if the North attacked in force. For that reason U.S. air power did not dwindle as fast as ground forces during the withdrawal. The tactical air power available for a major contingency did decrease, however, even in the face of the enemy buildup. Even then most U.S. air efforts went toward interdicting the Ho Chi Minh trail complex in Laos and northeastern Cambodia. The COMMANDO HUNT interdiction campaigns had the specific goal of preventing a major buildup and offensive such as occurred late in the dry season of 1972.

~~(S)~~ Almost all indicators pointed to the enemy buildup as early as September 1971. The U.S. command launched such air offensives as PRIZE BULL and PROUD DEEP ALPHA to blunt or preempt the Communist effort. Still the Communists continued to work toward a decisive encounter as the American forces withdrew and the political situation in the U.S. seemed to bode well for a NVA military spectacular. Realizing this, the Americans made plans and preparations for countering Communist moves.

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(S) Operations Plans C101 and C103 (COMMANDO FLASH and COMMANDO FLY) called for the rapid deployment of PACAF tacair assets in varying numbers to augment existing forces in SEAsia. OPLAN C-101 had been implemented when the offensive broke and COMMANDO FLY (the 35 TFS) deployed soon after 1 April. Bomber and tanker forces were either given increased sortie levels or were augmented in moderate levels in the period between January and 1 April.

(S) Once the invasion began, the need for a massive tactical air power infusion became critical. The enemy offensive was a surprise in that few people expected the NVA to throw almost their entire strength into the attempt to defeat SVN outright. The use of armor in such massive numbers and in some locations was also a shock. The ARVN wavered on the verge of collapse and needed aid desperately. The answer came in several forms.

(S) The most spectacular was the CONSTANT GUARD deployments--I, II, and III. Most of the aircraft units in CONSTANT GUARD were F-4s but others were F-105s and EB-66s. In CONSTANT GUARD III an entire wing, the 49 TFW, deployed to Takhli, which had been turned over to the RTAF in March, 1971. This was the largest single unit move in TAC history. Another extensive set of deployments was the buildup of the carrier fleet from three to six CVAs on station off the coasts of SEAsia. The USMC also deployed a large contingent of fighter-bombers to Da Nang and Bien Hoa (A-4s) during the second phase of the air buildup. The SAC buildup to counter the offensive assumed awesome proportions as well with B-52s and KC-135s being deployed

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to several bases in Thailand and the western Pacific. All these deployments constituted the largest tactical airpower buildup, over such a short period, in history.

(S) The third phase of the 1972 U.S. air deployments was closely tied to the continued drawdown in RVN. The 366 TFW and the USMC MAG 15/Forward redeployed with almost all tacair assets going to Thailand. An entirely new base, Nam Phong, was opened to beddown MAG 15/Forward. The SAC buildup at Thailand and West PAC bases continued through the end of July.

(S) American personnel in Thailand at the end of July totaled nearly 50,000, most of them airmen. There were nearly 850 U.S. planes in the country making American airpower the strongest striking force the U.S. had ever had there. ^{192/}

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5. (S/NF) MACV, 1971 Command History, Volume I, 25 April 1972, VI-1. Hereafter cited as MACV, History, I.
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7. (S/NF) MACV, History, I, VI-31.
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10. (U) New York Times, 17 December 1971, p. 3.
11. (U) The Baltimore Sun, 17 December 1971, p. 7.
12. (U) The Baltimore Sun, 5 January 1972, 2.
13. (U) "Vietnamization," Newsweek, 10 January 1972, 6.
14. (U) "Vietnam; As War Winds Down," US News and World Report, 10 January 1972, 6.
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59. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 051101Z Feb 72, 7AF (Lavelle) to PACAF (Clay).
60. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 060915Z Feb 72, 13AF to CINCPACAF/DO.
61. (TS) Msg, 070430Z Feb 72, 13AF (McNickle) to 7AF (Lavelle).
62. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 070432Z Feb 72, CINCPACAF to 7AF and 13AF.
63. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 070434Z Feb 72, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC.
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71. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 251808Z Mar 72, CINCPAC to JCS/CJCS.
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88. (TS) Msg, 040510Z Apr 72, CINCPACAF to 5AF.
89. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 051212Z Apr 72, 7AF to COMUSMACV; (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 049249Z Apr 72, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV; and (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 041115Z Apr 72, COMUSMACV to 7AF.
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94. (TS) Msg, 300450Z Apr 72, CINCPAC to CINCPACAF; and (S) Msg, 051831Z May 72, CINCPACAF to 7AF/DO.
95. (TS) Msg, 070208Z June 72, CINCPACAF to 7, 13 and 7/13 AFs.
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99. (TS) Msg, 060454Z Feb 72, CSAF to all commands.
100. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 051130Z Apr 72, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC.
101. (S) Msg, 052353Z Apr 72, JCS to CSAF and CINCPAC.
102. (TS) Msg, 060720Z Apr 72, COMUSMACTHAI to CINCPAC.
103. (S) Msg, 052357Z Apr 72, JCS to CSAF and CINCPAC; and (S) Msg, 060705Z Apr 72, TAC/DO to CSAF.
104. (S) Ltr, 561 TFS/CC to 388 LG, Subj: "CONSTANT GUARD assessment," 16 May 72. Hereafter cited as (S) Ltr, 561 TFS.
105. (S) Ltr, 388 TFW/LGX to 7AF/DOA/LGX, Subj: "CONSTANT GUARD Assessments," 24 May 72. Hereafter cited as (S) Ltr, 388 TFW.
106. (S) Msg, 181055Z Apr 72, 388 TFW/LGX to 13AF/LGX, Subj: "Lessons Learned." Hereafter cited as (S) 388 TFW Lessons Learned Msg.
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114. (TS) Msg, 061731Z Apr 72, TAC to 9AF; also (TS) Msg, 060454Z Apr 72, AF/X00X to TAC.
115. (S) Msg, 071351Z Apr 72, JCD to CSAF: (S) Msg, 072318Z Apr 72, CSAF to TAC: and (S) Msg, 101730Z Apr 72, 2 ACFTLFVRCP/Langley AFB, VA. to CINCSAC.
116. (S) Ltr, 388 TFW; and (S) Msg, 181055Z Apr 72, 388 TFW/LGX/CCH to 13AF/LGX/CSH (Hereafter cited as (S) 388 TFW/LGX Msg 181055Z Apr 72).
117. See f. n. 103 for sources.
118. (S) Msg, 062000Z Apr 72, Frag Order 72-3 to OPLAN 100, TAC/DO to Multiple Addressees.
119. (S) Msg, 100730Z Apr 72, Retransmit of TAC/DO (S) Msg, 062000Z Apr 72, 13AF to 388 TFW/LGX.
120. (S) 388 TFW/LGX Msg, 181055Z Apr 72.
121. (S) Msg, 072100Z Apr 72, TAC/DO to multiple addressees; also (TS) Msg, 070401Z Apr 72, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC.
122. (S) Msg, 140601Z Apr 72, 13AF to 8 TFW/388 TFW; (S) Msg, 081230Z Apr 72, TAC/DO to Multiple Addressees; (S) Msg, 090510Z Apr 72, TAC/DO to Multiple Addressees; and (U) Msg, 082240Z Apr 72, CINCPACAF to MAC.
123. (TS) Msg, 070101Z Apr 72, CINCPACAF to 7AF/XP.
124. (S) Msg, 082051Z Apr 72, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC.
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129. (S) Ltr, 388 TFW.
130. (S) Msg, 260300Z Apr 72, TAC/USAFRED to Multiple Addressees.
131. (S) Msg, undated and airmailed, 432 TRW/308 TFS to Hq 7AF/DOA. Hereafter cited as (S) 308 TFS CONSTANT GUARD Assessment.
132. (S) Msg, 190836Z May 72, 58 TFS to 7AF/DOA (hereafter cited as (S) 58 TFS CONSTANT GUARD Assessment); and (U) 432 Wg Ops Plans, "Current F4 Deployments to SEA," Fact Sheets, undated.
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134. (S) Ibid., also (S) 308 TFS CONSTANT GUARD Assessment; (S) 58 TFS CONSTANT GUARD Assessment; and (S) Msg, 231330Z May 72, 432 TRW/DOXA to 7AF/DOA.
135. (S) Baily Interview; also Interviews, Subj: "CONSTANT GUARD Assessments" with Lt Colonels John Downey and Frank Johnston, 58th and 308 TFS Squadron Commanders, 16 May 1972, at Udorn RTAFB by Capt Charles A. Nicholson, Project CHECO.
136. (S) Msg, 151030Z May 72, 13AF to 49 TFW.
137. (TS) Msg, 101259Z Apr 72, JCS to CINCPAC, CINCPAC, and CINCSAC; and (TS) Msg, 120526Z Apr 72, CINCPAC to JSC.
138. (S) Interview, Subj: "CONSTANT GUARD III Deployment," with Brigadier General Jack Bellamy, Commander, 49 TFW, at Takhli RTAFB, 19 May 1972, by Capt Charles A. Nicholson, Project CHECO. Hereafter cited as (S) Bellamy Interview.

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140. (S) Interview, Subj: "CONSTANT GUARD III Deployment," with Col Robert B. Murphy, Assistant DCS, Logistics, 13AF and Initial Commander, 6499 Combat Support Group (Provisional), at Takhli RTAFB, 19 May 1972, by Capt Charles A. Nicholson, Project CHECO (hereafter cited as (S) Murphy Interview); also (S/NF) Msg, 270900Z Apr 72, 13AF to PACAF Units.
141. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 081941Z Apr 72, PACAF AFFSO to 7AF AFSSO.
142. (S) Msg, 042235Z May 72, CSAF to 49 TFW.
143. (S) Murphy Interview.
144. (S/NF) Msg, 050030Z May 72, 13AF to 13AF units.
145. (S) Msg, 050830Z May 72, 13AF/CC to CINCPACAF; and (S) Msg, 052000Z May 72, CINCPACAF to 13AF/CC.
146. (S) Bellamy Interview.
147. Ibid.
148. Ibid., also (S) Interviews, Subj: "CONSTANT GUARD III Deployment," with Lt Col Robert Farrell, 49 TRW Chief of Logistics; Lt Col Mapes, Chief of Maintenance; Lt Col Berger, 49 Services Squadron Commander, and Major Gerald R. McCluskey, Mobility Officer at Takhli RTAFB, 18-20 May 1972, by Capt Charles A. Nicholson, Project CHECO.
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150. (S) Msg, 062208Z Apr 72, JCS to CINCPAC.
151. (U) Msg, 082235Z Apr 72, JCS to CINCLANT; and (U) Msg, 091756Z Apr 72, CINCLANT to JCS.
152. (S) Jacoby Interview.
153. (TS) Msg, 022127Z Apr 72, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT; and (S) Jacoby Interview.
154. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 050925Z Feb 72, CINCPACFLT to CINCPAC.

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157. (TS) Msg, 061427Z Apr 72, CG/1 MAW to CINCPACFLT.
158. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 101110Z Apr 72, COMUSMACV to 7AF Commander; and (S) Szewc Interview.
159. (S) Szewc Interview.
160. (S) Msg, 100310Z Apr 72, CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT; (S) Msg, 102051Z Apr 72, CG First MARBDE to COFMFPAC; and (S) Szewc Interview.
161. (TS) Msg, 041443Z Apr 72, JCS to SAC; (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 051015Z Apr 72, CINCPAC to JCS/CJCS; and (TS) Msg, 070101Z Apr 72, CINCPACAF to 7AF/XP.
162. (S) Msg, 080415Z Apr 72, 8AF to 7AF/DO/SAC ADVON.
163. (S) DOCB Briefing, "Counter Offensive Air Operations Summary."
164. (S) Msg, 090220Z Apr 72, 13AF/XP to CINCPACAF/XP.
165. (U) Msg, 120720Z Apr 72, 13AF to CINCPACAF.
166. (U) Msg, 142209Z Apr 72, CINCPACAF to CINCSAC.
167. (S) DOCB Briefing, "Counter Offensive Air Operations Summary."
168. (S) Msg, 042240Z May 72, CINCSAC to CINCPAC; and (TS) Msg, 032346Z May 72, JCS to CINCSAC.
169. (S) Msg, 180015Z May 72, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC.
170. (S) Msg, 180230Z May 72, CINCSAC/DO to 301 ARW.
171. (TS) Msg, 190450Z May 72, AMEMB Bangkok to SECSTATE/SECDEF; and (TS) Msg, 200250Z May 72, CINCPACAF to 7 and 13AFs.
172. (TS) Msg, 072351Z Jun 72, JCS to CINCPAC; (TS) Msg, 090355Z Jun 72, COMUSMACTHAI to CINCPAC; and (TS) Msg, 101831Z Jun 72, CINCPACAF to 13AF.

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- 174. (TS) Msg, 232000Z May 72, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC; and (TS) Msg, 212325Z May 72, JCS to CINCPAC.
- 175. (TS) Msg, 240401Z May 72, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC; also (TS) Msg, 270451Z May 72, CINCPAC to CINCPACAF.
- 176. (TS) Msg, 141220Z Apr 72, 7AF to CINCPACAF; and (S) Msg, 190201Z Apr 72, 7AF to CINCPACAF.
- 177. (U) Msg, 101951Z Apr 72, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC.
- 178. (S) Msg, 050416Z May 72, CINCPAC to CINCPACAF.
- 179. (U) Msg, 200700Z Apr 72, 13AF to Dep Cmdr 7/13AF.
- 180. (S) DOCB Briefing, "Counter Offensive Air Operations Summary."
- 181. (TS/SPECAT) Msg, 060025Z Jan 72, AFSSO USAF (Ryan) to AFSSOs PACAF and 7AF (Clay and Lavelle).
- 182. (TS/LIMDIS) 7AF OPLAN 770 (Draft).
- 183. (S) Msg, 170400Z May 72, 13AF to 8 TFW and 432 TRW.
- 184. (TS) Msg, 222037Z May 72, CINCPACAF to 13AF; (TS) Msg, 270241Z May 72, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC; and (TS) Msg, 270241Z May 72, CINCPACAF to 13AF.
- 185. (TS) Msg, 231326Z May 72, AMEMB Bangkok to SECDEF/ST.
- 186. (TS) Msg, 142221Z May 72, CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI; (TS) Msg, 240406Z May 72, CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI; and (TS) Msg, 270445Z May 72, COMUSMACTHAI to CINCPAC.
- 187. (TS) Msg, 050238Z Jun 72, COM7FLT to CTF 79; and (TS) Msg, 070246Z Jun 72, COMSEVENTHFLT to CINCPACFLT.
- 188. (TS) Msg, 072351Z Jun 72, JCS to CINCPAC and CINCSAC.
- 189. (S) Szewc Interview.

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190. (TS) Msg, 270451Z May 72, CINCPACAF to CINCPAC; and (TS)
Msg, 030355Z Jun 72, CINCPACAF to 7 and 13AFs and 49 TFW.
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192. (TS) Msg, 231326Z May 72, AMEMB Bangkok to SECDEF/ST; also
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23 May 1972.

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GLOSSARY

AAA	Antiaircraft Artillery
ABCCC	Airborne Command and Control Center
ABF	Attack by Fire
ACCS	Airborne Command and Control Squadrons
AO	Area of Operation
ARRS	Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron
ARS	Air Refueling Squadron
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
AW	Automatic Weapons
BOS	Basic Operating Support
BST	Bomb Squadron, Tactical
C	Confidential
CCK	Ching Chung Kang AB, Taiwan
CINCPAC	Commander, Pacific Command
CINCPACAF	Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Air Forces
CINCPACFLT	Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
COMUSMACV	Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
CONUS	Continental U.S.
CSAF	Chief of Staff of the Air Force
CSG	Combat Support Group
CVA	Attack Aircraft Carrier
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DO	Director of Operations
EW	Electronic Warfare
FSB	Fire Support Bases
FOL	Forward Operating Location
FRANK	Forces Armee Nationale Khmer
GCI	Ground Control Intercept
GVN	Government of South Vietnam
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KR	Khmer Republic
LGB	Laser Guided Bomb
LOC	Lines of Communication

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MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MAG	Marine Air Group
MAW	Marine Air Wing
MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
MIG	Soviet Built Aircraft
MR	Military Region
MRTT	Military Region Tri-Thien-Hue
NKP	Nakhon Phanom
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NVN	North Vietnamese
OB	Order of Battle
OL	Operating Location
OPLAN	Operations Plan
PACOM	Pacific Command
PDJ	Plaine Des Jarres
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
S	Secret
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SAD	Strategic Aerospace Division
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile
SEAsian	Southeast Asian
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
S/NF	Secret/NOFORN
SVN	South Vietnam
SW	Strategic Wing
TAC	Tactical Air Command
TACAIR	Tactical Air
TAC-E	Tactical Emergency
TDY	Temporary Duty
TEWS	Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron
TFS	Tactical Fighter Squadrons
TFW	Tactical Fighter Wing
TRW	Tactical Reconnaissance Wing
TS	Top Secret

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U.S.
US-CINCREC
USMC
USN

Unclassified
United States
CINC, Readiness Command
U.S. Marine Corps
U.S. Navy

VC
VMA
VMFA

Viet Cong; Vietnamese Communist
Marine Attack Squadron
Marine Fighter/Attack Squadron

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